

**A REPLY**  
TO THE  
**REV. FATHER GRAHAM'S**  
**LECTURE**

**On Modern Infidelity**

BY A WORKINGMAN.

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I imagine a man must have a good deal of vanity to believe, and a good deal of boldness who affirms, that all the doctrines he holds are true, and all he rejects are false.—*Benj. Franklin.*

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Give unqualified assent to no propositions but those the truth of which is so clear and distinct that they cannot be doubted.—*Huxley.*

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Everyone must think in his own way to arrive at truth.—*Goethe.*

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Let truth and error grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse in a fair and open encounter?—*Milton.*

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Why should I wear my grandfather's hat?—my head was never measured for it.—*A. Bronson Alcott.*

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**PRICE, - 10 CENTS.**

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**MONTREAL.**

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November 1881.

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## ERRATA.

- Page 2—Tenth line from bottom, for, And Ireland, read,—In Ireland.
- " 13—Second paragraph from bottom, second line, for, was more suggestive.  
read,—were more, &c.
- " 19—Third paragraph from bottom, last line, read,—such a catalogue of  
hideous crimes.
- " 23—Last paragraph, second line, for reign, read,—reigned.
- " 24—Fourth paragraph, fourth line, for prove, read,—proved.
- " 25—Eighth paragraph, second line, for cubics, read,—cubits, and in follow  
ing paragraph, same page, for have, read,—leave.
- " 26—Fifth paragraph, third line, read,—explain how it is, &c.
- " 27—Sixth paragraph, last line, for prosecute, read,—persecute.
- " 29—Fifth line, for Plotimus, read.—Plotinus.

*Minor typo-errors, especially in punctuation, and orthography, must be left to  
the kind indulgence of the reader.*



# INTRODUCTION.

From an impartial standpoint it is a sad spectacle to witness the frantic efforts of those in whom belief in the myths and superstitions of bygone centuries has become second nature, and who seek to perpetuate that system which would choke inquiry, strangle investigation, and clothe the living growing thought of the present in the garments of the dead past. They relegate all the phenomena of nature to which science has not as yet applied her callipers to invisible agencies, benevolent or malevolent as the exigencies of the case may demand and instinctively convinced that all truth is embodied in their peculiar creed, denounce as false delusions of the evil one, all doctrines or theories which do not fit their cut and dried conceptions, and they view the advancing march of science with a dislike in some cases amounting to positive hatred. If in her onward course science has encroached on the domain hitherto sacred to the priest, irrefutable facts have pointed the way, and in the search for truth the likes or dislikes of men cannot be taken into account.

The priests instead of at once accepting the facts and dropping the fictions which had hitherto done duty for facts, assume a defiant attitude, put on their war paint and shaking their spiritual tomahawks shout to science "Hold! So far but no further!" A conflict must ensue, and if Theology's scalp is hung up to dry in the lodge of science, so much the worse for Theology.

Scientific faith is a reliance on principles which were discovered by arduous and patient investigation of the phenomena of nature. Principles which are incessantly tested, which challenge criticism, and which every new discovery either strengthens or modifies.

The Universe is her bible, every discoverer a priest, the attainment of knowledge and the resultant happiness to mankind, her object. Science has no popes whose *ipse dixit* must be accepted by her disciples without challenge, nor does she consign to Hell all those who reject her teachings. Her methods are exact. She prefers weighing and measuring rather than guessing. She *works* to attain an end, rather than prays. When a dark day comes, or a comet appears in the heavens she does not crawl into a sack, or grovel in an ash-pit, but rolls up her sleeves and goes to work to find out if possible the cause of the darkness or to map the course of the comet's path through space.

She exorcises all the devils, ghosts, demons and sorcerers, and performs more wonders in an hour, than the whole army of immaterial absurdities have been able to produce in a thousand years.

Those persons who hate science, are those who fear that science will shatter the delusions and hoary superstitions on which they have fed the sheep for centuries.

Blinded by bigotry and urged by religious zeal some of those persons who dislike the methods and conclusions of science, seek to defend their faith in the supernatural, and prop up their cause by loud abuse of those who may represent the scientific thought of the day.

These defenders of a modified paganism generally follow the one line of argument, abuse is their stock in trade, varied here and there with second hand allusions to "Darwin's ancestors," "follies of free thought," "dangers of unbelief," "scientific fools," etc., this and a dogmatic style of putting their absurdities joined to a judicious use of the devil and reverent allusions to the Deity they claim to represent, form the basis of their attacks on science.

Of this class the Rev. Father Graham, parish priest of Alexandria, Ont. is a worthy exemplar, as his effusion called "The Infidelity of the present day" will abundantly prove to any one who will take the trouble to wade through the mass of epithet and arrogant assumption which he published in the columns of the Montreal "True Witness" in the month of March last.

Taken as a whole, the lecture from the Free Thought standpoint is unworthy of answer, but as there may be some weak minds in the "one true fold" who might be imposed on by the Rev. Gentleman's blank cartridge and bombastic rhetoric, he must pardon me for answering him under the head of

## AN OPEN LETTER

TO THE

# REV. FATHER GRAHAM,

*Parish priest of Alexandria.*

Rev. Sir,—After reading your lecture styled "The infidelity of the present day" I cannot help thinking that you fired your theological gun not to intimidate *bona fide* Free Thinkers, but rather to frighten those sheep who may be nibbling heretical herbage in the fields of Free Thought.

Your denunciation of that inestimable necessity, and blessing to the church viz: the Devil, is to say the least amusing, and might have been swallowed a century ago, but now, "alas for the times and the manners" one is tempted to ask you as a representative of the Vicar of Christ why you do not influence Jehovah to kill the Devil, or give him a thousand years in penitentiary, and thus do away with the devilish cause and the resultant infidelity at one fell blow?

But as I have no hope that you will entertain this idea, or that Jehovah would notice your petition if you did, I will address this troublesome Devil in your behalf:

Come stop, old Nick, what are you doing?  
Ye're always some black mischief brewing,  
Here's Father Graham's Christmas dinner  
Will no' digest; ye ancient sinner  
It's a' your fault  
That folks cast off their holy blinkers  
An' dare proclaim themselves Free Thinkers;  
Sons o' the De'il.  
But have a care, the Father's wroth  
An' if he'll catch you, by my troth  
From him you need expect no quarter  
He'll soak your tail in holy water  
Until you squeal;  
So take advice while still you may  
Pack up your duds and fly away,  
And mischief breed on other shores  
Stir up fresh trouble with the Boers,  
There's a new Czar to spoil in Russia,  
Old William's still supreme in Prussia,  
To Land League tunes, make England dance  
Expel the Jesuits from France,  
And Ireland too if ee'n you must  
Just raise a devil of a dust  
Go sow the seeds of revolution  
And teach the law of Evolution;  
This do, and more, you wicked elf,  
But if you value much yourself  
When you are flying o'er the earth  
Give Canada a wide, wide, berth,  
Or if you will persist in staying  
For Heavens sake,—look out for Graham!

But let us seriously consider the devilish phase of your lecture Reverend Sir.

In your opening remarks you say "My friends, there are times in the history of the world when the devil is more active than at others. He seems like British virtue to sleep for a century or so, and then breaks out with a violence as tremendous as an eruption of Vesuvius and just as destructive. He is very active in this century of ours, and has an army of "Agnostics," "Advanced Scientists," "Free Thinkers," "Materialists," etc. at his heels for the speedier damnation of the world, and the further advancement of what they call Free Thought."

This Rev. Sir, is truly a devilish sad state of affairs, and a blue look out for the inhabitants of our planet.

The Devil must be holding a sort of satanic revival just now in which the big devils, and the little devils, are taking a "long pull a strong pull, and a pull all-together," with the object in view of damning every mother's son that has an existence on this speck of the Universe which we call the Earth.

No wonder you are both excited and angry Rev. Sir.

But your Reverence has forgotten to tell us who this Devil is, or where the devil he came from. Does your Reverence really *know* anything about this awful Devil? If yes; why did you not tell us? If no; your Reverence is treating of things of which you are ignorant, and according to the syllogism which you offer to lend the foolish "feelosopher"—but which I am afraid you cannot spare—"all those who treat of things of which they are ignorant are fools;" but Father Graham treats of things of which he is ignorant; therefore Father Graham is a fool. This is one of your pills Rev. Sir, and you must not object to your own medicine.

Your Reverence handles the Devil in a masterly manner, popping him in here and there, holding him up one moment, and dropping him like a hot potato the next, never giving us a good look at him or telling us anything about him that would give us an idea as to what kind of a Devil he is.

But the Devil is a hot subject Rev. Sir, and you might have scorched your holy fingers had you handled him less gingerly.

But as your Reverence leaves us as much in the dark as ever as to the origin or whereabouts of this infernal cause of modern infidelity, and as such cause must be worthy more than a passing glance, let us see what information we can get of his satanic majesty.

As it must be a very wicked Devil who would so persistently seek to damn mankind I conclude, Rev. Sir, that the Devil you speak of must be the Christian Devil, and as there may be a slight difference between the catholic Devil and the protestant Devil, I will seek for information on this diabolical subject in the "Douay Bible," which the Holy Ecumenick Council "in the Holy Ghost assembled" say in the admonition must be accepted "not as the words of men; but the words of God."

Yet with the aid of God's word, we are puzzled to decide whether there is one devil or more than one devil, and I must confess my utter inability to give the devil his due, but as I cannot find the slightest trace of his origin, I suspect that like "Topsy" he "just growed."

In the Book of Job, 1st Chap. 6 v. we have one devil mentioned, and in Lev. 27, c. 20 v. we have devils mentioned, so that whether it is a singular devil or a plurality of Devils I cannot say, but I favor the idea that it is a very singular devil.

When we consider the immense army of Popes, Priests, Ministers, Missionaries, Bishops, Archbishops, Monks, Deacons, Bible Societies, Christian Associations, Tract peddlars, Bible readers and Revivalists it takes to hold him only partly in subjection, we cannot help thinking that he is a very costly Devil indeed.

You say Rev. Sir, that "the Devil deceived our mother Eve," but on consulting the word of God, I can find no mention of the Devil in the very meagre history of that interesting lady contained in the book of Genesis.

We have the simple statement in plain language Gen. 3, c. 1. v. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made." No sign of the Devil here Rev. Sir.

And again same chapter 14 v. we have the Lord God punishing the serpent (not the Devil) because he had deceived our mother Eve, in these words. "And the Lord God said to the serpent: because thou hast done this thing thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth, upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." Not the least allusion to a devil here Rev. Sir.

This history of the temptation and fall in Eden plainly states, first that God made the serpent more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth. Secondly, that this subtle serpent lured Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, with but little argument. Thirdly, that God punished the serpent for deceiving Eve, by condemning him to crawl, "all the days of his life."

Now Rev. Sir, where is your authority for saying that the Devil deceived our mother Eve? If you reply that the Devil assumed the form of a serpent to accomplish his fell purpose, then we have the sorry spectacle of an Almighty and all-knowing God, punishing a serpent for a crime of which he was innocent, while the Devil, laughing in his sleeve at the success of his ruse, gets off "scot free."

Besides Rev. Sir, there is no resemblance between the serpent and the devil, with perhaps the exception of the tail, for the popular conception of the devil paints him as black in colour, hooked nose, claw-like hands, curved horns, forked tail, and cloven hoofs which he has great difficulty in concealing.

There is but one hypothesis, Rev. Sir, on which you can reconcile the devil of to day with the serpent of Genesis, and that is that the devil, like every other thing in the Universe, is subject to the allmighty law of evolution.

I have heard that the devil has the entree to the best of society, and this we cannot doubt when we find that Heaven itself was not exempt from the visits of this aerial tramp.

In the divinely inspired Book of Job, 1st c. 6 v. we read that "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan was with them," nor did the Lord manifest the least anger at *his presence*, on the contrary, they had quite a pleasant chat together of which the devoted Job was the subject.

Job had good reason to remember this and a subsequent visit of Satan to Heaven; as Satan obtained permission from God to destroy his flocks, murder his children, and leave himself a mass of sores, grovelling on a dunghill, as an example to posterity of the way in which Jehovah rewards his honest and upright children.

As we learn by the case of Job that the devil must get permission from God to tempt us, and as we are not all Jobs, may we not reasonably ask, on the showing of God's own book, which of them is the Worst?



And further on Rev. Sir, you will find that the "*word*" itself is a little mixed on this devilish question, for the second Book of Kings 24 c. 1 v. tells us that "The anger of the Lord was again kindled against Israel and stirred up David among them, saying go number Israel and Judah" or in modern phraseology go take the census: and in the first Book of Chron. 21 Chap. 1 v. this essence of divine veracity tells us it was the devil did the *stirring up*, and caused the census to be taken.

Taking the census may seem to wretched unbelievers a very harmless proceeding, but the word of God tells us that it so angered Jehovah, that he sent a plague and killed seventy thousand of the Israelites in consequence.

Therefore though we cannot decide whether Jehovah or Satan caused the census to be taken; we may be certain that "there is a something or other we can't exactly say what" in the taking of a census, that convulses high Heaven with rage, and brings death and desolation on the unfortunate children of this angry father; and I have no doubt, but that some dire calamity will overtake the people of Canada in consequence of the sacrilegious conduct of their rulers who, flying in the face of this example, are at present engaged in taking the census. I am afraid there will be the devil to pay for it.

But to all those who may be unfortunate enough to raise the devil, or to become possessed of a devil, it will be matter for rejoicing to learn that Jehovah has not left his children without the means of driving him away or casting him out.

This divine prescription may be found in the Book of Tobias sixth Chap. 8 and 19 Vers. where you will read that by putting "a small piece of the heart or liver of a fish on the coals, the smoke thereof driveth away all kinds of devils, either from man or woman." Here is a remedy simple, cheap, and sure, which I heartily commend to your Reverence as a means to cast out the Free Thought devil.

We also read in the Book of Tobias that, "the Angel took the devil and bound him in the desert of upper Egypt," but shortly after he is at large again. He seems to euchre Heaven every deal.

The Devil is somewhat of a controversialist, as we read in Jude, 9 ver. that he disputed with Michael the Archangel about the body of Moses.

He sometimes assumes the duties of clerk of the weather, as we read that "One day St. Francis de Salles was blessing a churchyard; a torrent of rain prevented the ceremony." The saint however was in no wise daunted, made an exorcism, and immediately the firmament recovered its serenity. Here the faithful may find an example of the infinite wisdom of God who manifested his power, by first permitting the devil to annoy the good saint by a torrent of rain, and then giving the saint the power to exorcise the demon. The skeptic would say, however, that this reminded him of the story of the man who cut his friend's head and then gave him a plaster.

The great St. Augustine attributes the prodigies wrought by magicians to contracts with the Devil, and explains how the devil keeps his contract from a desire of being honored. Simple Augustine, peace to thy ashes!

The devil seems to take particular delight in annoying very pious persons, as witness his extraordinary efforts in the case of St. Anthony when he appeared in a number of character changes, but finally losing his temper he beat the saint black and blue, which was to say the least a very shabby proceeding. Anthony's guardian Angel must have been off duty that night.

The biographers of the Curé of Ars tells us that "at midnight, three great blows on the outer door warned the Curé of Ars of his enemy's presence. After having amused himself by raising an horrible clatter on the staircase, the

Devil entered ..... He betook himself to the bed curtains, clutched them, and shook them furiously. Often he cried out in a scoffing tone: Vianey, Vianey, eater of truffles, we shall have thee!" Let us hope for the sake of the good curé, that the truffles of which he appears to have been a lover, may have had something to do with this apparition.

Then we have him with brazen effrontery tempting Jesus whom he should have known to be God with an offer of the Kingdoms of the earth if he would fall down and worship him, and the next moment he is whining for permission to enter into a herd of swine, which permission, being granted by Jesus, the herd ran into the sea and were drowned. This was hard on the owner of the hogs. Rev. Sir, but had the devil been drowned as well as the swine, there would not be a parson or priest in the land to day.

We also read in holy writ that the devil "Goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," this text formed the basis of a sermon delivered by a western preacher who said "dearly beloved, let us consider this text under the four following heads. 1st. Let us inquire who the devil he was. 2ndly. let us consider his location, where the devil he was. 3rdly. his destination where the devil he was going, and 4thly. what the devil he was roaring about anyhow."

But let us consign this roaring and hungry fraud, to the bottomless pit of oblivion. Not to this weird spectre of the imagination is due "the infidelity of the present day" Rev. Sir, but to the gradual emancipation of the mind of man from slavery to priest-craft and king-craft. Not to the ghoulisn creations of ignorance. Rev. Sir; but to the fact that man is opening his eyes to the reality that the church has ever failed to back her arrogant and blasphemous claims, by proofs, or her pretences by deeds.

Not to Spencer or Mill, but to the impotence of that church or any other which seeks by petitioning invisible Deities to benefit mankind.

After eighteen centuries of prayers and prostrations before tinselled altars and draped statues, invocations to defunct saints, carrying bones of ditto in procession, sprinkling of holy water, burning of incense, ringing of bells, and all the paraphernalia by which God's holy Church (?) seeks to propitiate an angry God: after eighteen centuries, during the greater part of which time this holy Catholic Church held undisputed sway over the minds of men, misery, suffering, oppression, poverty, with their attendant evils, robbery, murder, and prostitution, have descended as heirlooms to the mass of mankind, and to day ragged, ignorant, and hideous, stare us in the face.

To this, Rev. Sir, and the inconsistency of a Church that, while preaching free will, seeks by every possible means to stamp the brand of superstition on the undeveloped brain of childhood, bending the twig that the tree may incline—to the blood stained records of your church and to the march of science—which drags no matter how slowly "Gods holy Catholic Church" after it—you may attribute the infidelity of the present day."

And now let us speak of devils we can know something of. Devils that have cursed mankind for century. The black brutal devils of superstition and ignorance, that century after century, have enabled the crafty, the bold, and the heartless, to despoil, outrage, and oppress the simple, the guileless, and weak. The Devil of superstition that in the words of the poet Shelley.

"People earth with demons, hell with men, And heaven with slaves."

This devil shielded the tyrant under the wing of Deity, for was it not written "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no

power but of God; the powers that are, are ordained of God. Whomsoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." This miserable doctrine is responsible for the blood of millions, and has propped many a gluttonous despot on his throne; clothing the king with power from on high, making him the master, instead of the servant of the people.

There must be no rebellion against the blue blooded members of the royal tribe who, whether with brains or without, mount the thrones of Europe, and graciously condescend to spend the money of the *common people* in licence and debauchery, while the people butcher one another in the name of loyalty for his Most Royal this, or Most Gracious that.

And again it is written in this divine Book "Resist not evil." There's a blessed doctrine for the oppressed ones. If any one oppress you, rob or illtreat you, dont defend yourself like a man; what though your wife be insulted or your daughter outraged, "resist not," but crawl off to your cowardly home and try to be happy in the thought that you have not imperilled the safety of the thing you call soul by resisting evil. Be content my dear children, starve and rot, drag out your miserable existences in bye ways and alleys, crowded together in foul dark houses, in filthy yards, where disease, want, and vice, peep from every window and sit at every door; where ragged children with a hard look on their faces, stalk barelegged through the streets picking up the stray chips that are to warm the scanty meal, liable to be crushed beneath the wheels of my Lord Bishop's carriage on its way to his palace.

"Be content my dear children, God ordains all things for the best, trust in him and in his own good time he will do, "as pleases him best." Give no ear to those "*intellectual lepers*" and "*moral monsters*" who tell you to rely on yourselves, who tell you there is no devil to fear, but the devil of ignorance, who tell you, you are under-paid and over-worked, while titled loafers, and fat preachers, grow stout and rosy on your earnings; who tell you to demand justice, not charity; who would change your fear of the supernatural for the love of knowledge; who would teach you to know your body before speculating about your soul. Those are soul-destroying doctrines, my dear children, there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water, toil on we say, and we, your pastors will beg alms from the rich, that you may be fed by the hand of charity. Save, from your scanty earnings fifty cents per month and we will enroll your names in the Society for the relief of the souls in purgatory,\* whose intercession, joined to the masses we will chant—to say nothing of the indulgences we will grant—cannot fail to influence Deity in your behalf; for cash down in the bitter now and now, you may have happiness in the sweet bye and bye.

This is the devilish doctrine, Rev. Sir, which, fostered by superstition and backed by the sword, has cursed mankind and stamped heresy and treason on the brow of honesty. But the light has been let in, despots tremble. The divinity that did hedge the King in former days, might now be rendere. "How dynamite doth hedge the King." Privilege after privilege is being torn from the hands of the Royal usurpers, to be vested in their rightful owners the people. Man is emerging, Rev. Sir, from the gloomy fog of superstition that for centuries has enveloped him. The people are tired of the monotonous rehearsal of mildewed miracles worked by saints, and fathers of a church, whose disciples and sons to day are impotent. They are longing to hear just one little message from the souls of the faithful departed. They would like to know whether hell is situated East, West, North, or South of this planet. They argue with one-another, whether the purple and Gold draped Vicar of the ragged

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\* Société pour le soulagement des âmes du purgatoire, sous le patronage de Mgr. l'Evêque de Montréal.

and humble Jesus, owns a chart or map of the Universe on which Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, are delineated, with due reference to latitude and longitude. They are beginning to think for themselves, Rev. Sir, and the more they think for themselves, the less need of paying the priest to think for them. The more they rely on themselves, the less need of charity. The broader their conception of Nature, the more ridiculous will appear that doctrine which teaches a God like unto a King, and a heaven like a court, where majesty can only be approached by the intercession of those high in authority. The day is fast approaching Rev. Sir, when the people shall rise, freed of this ignorant devil forever. Common sense with the help of observation and experience will exorcise him; and Reason, freed of the warp of superstition, will do what Jehovah and his priests have been either unable or unwilling to do, and that is "*kill the devil.*"

Yet a little while, Rev. Sir, and the day shall be past for shaking burning lakes, black devils, and angry gods, in the face of the people, when having outgrown their childish, puerile simplicity they shall treat your threatenings of the "Raw head and bloody bones" of theology with the contempt the black fraud deserves,

After sixty hundred years of unexampled activity, matchless generalship and successful thwarting of the will of Deity; a success which casts reflections on omnipotence itself, would it not be well, Rev. Sir, to pension off this devil, full of years and honors, and get a more manageable quality of devil in his place.

But there are worse devils than "Auld Clootie," the devil of religious hate, for instance, this bigoted, persecuting, and intolerant devil, is the necessary attendant of settled religious conviction, and that church by whatsoever name it may be called, Pagan, Catholic, or Protestant, when supported by the civil power, has persecuted just in proportion to the power it has wielded; thus the pagans killed the catholics, the catholics, killed pagans, jews, protestants, and unbelievers, the protestants killed catholics, unitarians and dissenters, each and all believing they were doing the will of the Father who, they say, is in heaven and who is graciously pleased to let his zealous children fight it out as best they may.

And this bigoted devil is not yet cast out of the heart of man. In our own city we have lately seen the civil and military powers called in to prevent those persons who worship Jesus Christ under different banners, from cutting one another's throats.

But if those devils are not dead, they are doomed. Though they check the march of progress they are impotent to stop it. Science, or the religion of facts, is sweeping the cobwebs of superstition from the skies. Those devils are doomed and will die, slowly it may be, but none the less surely.

In the history of this planet gods and devils have lived and have died, ignorant man creates them, intelligent man destroys them. The devil of the future will not be the devil of the past. Old Nick has ceased to be the terror of mankind; on the contrary he furnishes material for many laughable tales..

He has had his day; *son chien est mort.* Not all the bleatings of the sheep or incantations of the shepherds from the "Boss" shepherd down, will ever resuscitate the devil as we knew him once. He is practically dead, yes dead, dead Sovereign Pontiff, dead my Lord Bishops and Archbishops, dead ye Prelates, Legates, and Cardinals, dead ye Rev. Fathers in God, dead ye Ministers, Priests, deacons, tract peddlars, and pulpit pounders, dead. The devil as we knew him once is dead! dead!! dead!!!

And now Rev. Sir, I beg to leave the devil in your holy hands, I have no use for him. Have him restuffed and put in a new frame, and he may

frighten the sheep yet a little while, and then? well, bury him, and let his epitaph be :

Here lies the main stay of the Church,  
Whose pastor's now left in the lurch  
Mourn with dismay and sore chagrin.  
The defunct Author of all sin,  
And cry "that this should come to pass !  
To live, we now must work, alas !"  
While the sheep once so meek and mute  
Are nibbling the forbidden fruit,  
Each plucking from the tree of knowledge,  
Earns his degree in Natures college.

Before leaving the devilish phase of your lecture, Rev. Sir, it will not be out of place to say a few words about this hell to which you consign those individuals who will not submit their reason to the dictum of the priest.

At one time there was no difficulty in locating hell ; it was beneath the earth, the volcano belching forth flames was believed to be the chimney of hell. When an eruption took place, (as often happens,) in conjunction with a thunderstorm, the heavens darting the lurid lightning towards earth, the volcano casting stones and lava towards heaven while the thunder rolled and pealed, and the earth trembled beneath the feet of men, they saw in this exhibition of the energy of Nature, a conflict between the god above and his powerful rival below. As they had placed the home of god, in the clouds, above the earth, they located hell or the home of the devil under the earth. And this pagan idea with a great many others was perpetuated in christianity. Hell was clothed with fresh terrors. the joys of Heaven were to be enhanced by witnessing the sufferings of the damned. The learned (?) Josephus in his "Dissertation on Hades" had no doubt but that the entrance to Hell would be actually discovered, and had the people of his day been permeated by the modern thirst for discovery, they would no doubt have fitted out expeditions to discover, (not the North pole,) but the gates of Hell. For centuries popes, priests bishops and saints, went into the valley of death believing that Heaven was above, and Hell beneath the earth ; until Galileo demonstrated the truth of the Copernican theory and proclaimed to the world that the earth moved, for which service God's Holy Catholic Church imprisoned him and forced him on bended knees to perjure himself.

But the truth Galileo uttered could not be strangled, not even by "*Roman Authority* ;" the facts of science triumphed over the fictions of theology. Hell was evicted from the holding it had occupied for ages, and "God's Holy Catholic Church" has been seeking a place to locate it ever since.

The highly coloured pictures—which were more plentiful a few years ago than now—which we gazed at with childish awe, depicting devils with forked tails tossing sinners with that dexterity which long continued practise gives, over the edge of a precipice, into the seething, boiling cauldron of flames below, where red hot serpents twined in fiery folds round their agonized limbs ; while Satan himself and the nobility of Hell danced an infernal cotillion, to the ceaseless music of the damned, but carried out the conception of hell that had been stamped on the mind of man by the teaching of an ignorant and fanatical priesthood. St. Augustine declared that all unbaptized infants would be damned though he hoped the fire would be moderated a little for them. Pious Saint ! Solacing belief ! Benevolent Creator !!!

But this Hell is not shaken in the face of the multitude as of old. The cool stream of reason is tempering the flames of Hell, and will in time extinguish them. In the mean time unless your Reverence can offer reasonable proof of



the existence of the flaming aggregation of horrors called Hell, you will do well to confine yourself to treating of things of which *you know* something or that "syllogism" of yours will be again in order.

You froth and rave and consign us to hell's flames which you say awaits us. At this truly orthodox outburst, we might tremble indeed did we not know that the pincers, the thumb screw, the faggot, and the stake, have been torn from the hands of the priest. You are no longer able to enjoy, as formerly, the pleasing spectacle of witnessing the bodies of those who denied the pretences of the priest, consigned to the flames, the faithful meanwhile anticipating the joys of Heaven, where they hope to contemplate the sufferings of their damned fellow creatures in the uncomfortable headquarters of Satan.

Who shall write the epitaph of the hundreds of thousands which this so called Holy Catholic Church has murdered in the name of God? Hell! If there is a hell, it will be so full of those whom Hood calls "Those pseudo privy councillors of God" that the very devil himself will not be able to wedge the smallest Atheist into the world ever produced inside the gates.

You consign us to hell—wake up man! you are living in the Nineteenth Century and hell is a total wreck—it never had any bottom to it, Father dear, and how could you expect it to stand? Hell! The mind involuntarily conjures the red and yellow flames, the devils with pitch-forks, the sinners and snakes below, while above we see half a dozen sanctimonious individuals in white night dresses with goose quill attachments, making tracks for a slit in a cloud where a long bearded person is waiting to receive them, presumably the host, or porter may be; and we smile Father Graham, in the face of your threat. But the vision fades and with it I beg to drop from sight that bottomless absurdity, Hell.

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## THE ABUSIVE PHASE.

I can readily conceive, Rev. Sir, that an honest believer, strongly impressed with the conviction that his creed or faith contained all and every element of truth, should seek to defend, nay more, to propagate that faith by all legitimate means; and would be justified in imparting or teaching to others, what he considered to be the truth.

But that any earnest man, much less a priest, and chosen disciple of the mild and lowly Jesus, should seek to bolster up his cause, by bawling invective, arouses the suspicion that the theological store-room is as bare of arguments as the fabled Mother Hubbards cupboard was of bones.

It might have been expected, considering your holy office, that your Reverence would have set an example of that mildness, charity, and patient endeavour—to bring the erring sheep back to the fold—which we had been so often told is a distinctive mark of the sons of that *tender mother*, the church. But no! The old spirit still lingers! Choleric son of a tender mother what a sorry spectacle you present!

While claiming to be a very mouthpiece of Heaven! you use indecent language. A saver of souls! You consign us to hell. An expounder of truth! You descend to falsehood. A dispenser of grace! Yet lacking grace yourself Holding the Catholic Church as the mother of liberty, yet bemoaning those good old days when free thought and speech was suppressed by the dungeon, the sword, and the faggot.

Holding your church as the mother of civilization yet lamenting in the absence of that "primitive state of society" in which you say "severe statutes curbed the disintegrating designs of the Atheist."

On no other ground, Rev. Sir, than that of temporary insanity, can I understand that you believe you are defending your creed or attacking Free Thought by the childish nonsense interlarded with billingsgate which you offer to the provincial world under the name of a lecture.

You are angry, no doubt, Rev. Father in God. Angry that men are bold enough to question your right to dogmatize. Astonished that men challenge your assertions, and demand at least a little proof, to back the claim that you are a chosen vessel. But you are destined to be astonished still further Rev. Sir, for the time is here in which the assertions of the priest is criticised, and every deviation from truth thrown back in his face.

Your sense of duty must have been in a state parallel to the "British virtue" you speak of, slumbering contentedly in the conservative bed of the church, surrounded by the hedge of power and privilege, which superstition has wrested from credulity.

What disturbed your Reverence? Did you dream that the devil in the guise of Tyndall or Darwin was preaching a sermon to your flock, from the book of Nature, and did you observe that there was not one sleepy head in the congregation? Or did you have the nightmare and imagine that Huxley was crushing you under an enormous fossil skull, on which was inscribed the legend 'thirty thousand years old,' while Darwin in a cardinal's hat held before your eyes a Papal Bull which made known to all men that "the Holy Church had fostered with tender solicitude the inspired efforts of her well beloved Son Chas. Darwin, who, after years of devout application, had demonstrated the truth of the theory of the "Origin of Species," a theory which the Catholic Church had always held in great veneration, but which she had not before felt the necessity of teaching as revealed doctrine," and winding up with the declaration in capital letters that "if any one shall not receive the doctrine of evolution in all its parts as set forth by our well beloved son, the Revd. Chas. Darwin, or shall deny that it is divinely inspired, let him be accursed.

But whatever the cause, it proved aggravating enough to make your Reverence arise, gird up your loins and set up to demolish the ogre, Free Thought.

Poor, Dear, Father Graham! you find yourself like the wife of Johnnie Sands floundering in the Stream in which you vainly imagined to drown Free Thought; and though like the fabled Johnnie our hands are tied; to a certain extent they are neither behind our backs nor useless, as your Reverence will perceive before we have done with you.

You vehemently ask us "What is matter? What is space? What is Nature, etc." and then without giving a single clue as to the meaning you attach to those words, and forgetting that you are unable to answer those questions yourself, though backed by "Roman authority," your theological zeal carries you beyond the bounds of decency, and you abuse Tyndall, Darwin, Huxley, and free thinkers in general, in language unbecoming a common scavenger,

Feeling your utter inability to offer or even attempt a refutation of the positions of any of those Gentlemen. you vent your spleen by throwing at their names, names that will be remembered when yours is forgotten—such epithets as "blasphemers," "petty brains," "pigmies," "asses," "blatherskites," "moral monsters," "intellectual lepers," etc.

But, Rev. Sir, every epithet marks a weakness, and every coarse word points to a defect in that armor which you so boastfully assert to be indefectible. Yours is not the language of conscious power to meet the assaults of unbelief

but rather the frantic efforts of the drowning wretch who seeks by clutching at straws to prolong existence yet a moment longer.

The manner in which you speak of Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, and others, is a proof to all thinking men, that you are acquainted with those names by proxy only, or through some prejudiced source.

Had your Reverence become acquainted with those Authors at first hand, their honest, manly style must have impressed you, and you might have written your thoughts in a decent manner. But those names require no defence at my hands, Rev. Sir, they represent men whose lives and works place them far above the reach of your lilliputian efforts to criticise or damage.

You have the usual characteristic inuendos about "free love," "sexual affinity," communism, Nihilism, and *anté natal* adjustment of population," which you say "are the logical results of free-thought." Reasoning by analogy Rev. Sir, I might with much more consistency affirm that, ignorant sexual relations, tyrannical forms of government, joining scrofulous and consumptive persons in marriage, perpetuation of disease through their sickly tainted offspring, overstocked families with their prematurely aged mothers and overworked fathers, ungoverned passions, houses of prostitution, jails, penitentiaries, and lunatic asylums, are the logical results of christianity.

That the existing relations of society are anything but perfect every sane man will admit. That disease, poverty, prostitution, crime, are existing evils, which every honest man should seek to remedy, as far as lies in his power, no man will be base enough to deny.

While the church has been content to apply her theological salve to the social sores and confined her treatment to the local effect; Free Thought has in opposition to the customs and habits of generations past, and prejudice present, boldly sought to probe those evils to the core, convinced that the only means of remedying the disease is by removing the cause. Infidels, heretics, blasphemers, have been the epithets hurled by bigotry at the heads of those men whose free unbiassed, and untrammelled thought has led them to take their place in the front rank of the army of investigators, reformers, and agitators of every age; doing the pioneer work of humanity, fighting the fight of right against might, rewarded by reviling, persecution, and imprisonment even now, while your holy church uses the power she has usurped to fix the attention and hopes of man on another world, situated we can't exactly say where, in which he is to receive that happiness which is his birthright here and now, while the mass grasp at the shadow and neglect the substance-

"Doubtless the pleasure is as great  
Of being cheated as to cheat."

As to Nihilism, I will not take a decided stand. I am not living in Russia, and what we know of Nihilism is no doubt coloured by the channels through which our information reaches us. But this much I will say, Rev. Sir, were I living in Russia, where a despot sat on the throne surrounded by parasites who gorged themselves day after day, year after year, and century after century, on the earnings of an enslaved, knouted, downtrodden people, I should be a Nihilist too; were I living in a country where I saw thousands of my fellow creatures, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, loaded with chains, beaten with knout, and consigned to the terrors of Siberia, merely on suspicion of doubting that every government official was appointed by Heaven to oppress them, I would be a Nihilist too. Were I in danger of being sent to that hell on earth called Siberia for venturing to assert that the Czar of all the Russias was not the most exemplary ruler on earth, I would be a Nihilist too.

Were I to attend church in that country, and a priest claiming to be ordained of Heaven, should tell me from the altar that, "all power is from God,

the powers that are, are ordained of God ;" should he ask me to join him in prayer, that the ruler above might spare the ruler below; that he might have time for further oppressions and fresh debaucheries ; did he tell me that the Ruler above counted the hairs of our head, and took cognizance of the sparrow's fall, yet took no account of the sufferings of his unfortunate and oppressed children ; I should leave that church a Nihilist, and an unbeliever too.

I have not the slightest doubt that if a communistic form of government were established in this country to-morrow we should have that versatile and holy chameleon called the catholic church, brazenly asserting that she had always fostered the tendency of man towards such form of government. And the first steamer from Europe would doubtless have on board a Legate, a Cardinal, whose office would be to establish friendly relations with the Vatican, provided the children of the country be submitted to their pious training, with a grant of land and exemption from taxation thrown in.

However, those social problems do not affect the question at issue ; whether socialism, etc. is, or is not, the logical result of free-thought, is not the question which underlies and is the foundation on which modern infidelity rests. These social questions will be decided in the future without the aid of the priesthood.

The question at issue is. Is Christianity true ? The silly remarks your Reverence makes regarding the personal appearance of Free Thinkers, is but an advertisement to the effect that your Reverence was at your wits end for material when you put this pebble in your priestly *rattle*. Your Reverence says "I do not know whether it is an act of "agnosticism" or profession of "advanced thought" but you will find a large proportion of free thinkers splitting their hair in the middle and nourishing their ambrosial locks even unto their shoulders."

This idea was no doubt suggested to your Reverence by a portrait of Jesus Christ who is represented as splitting his hair in the middle and nourishing his locks even unto his shoulders, and your Reverence will readily call to mind the fact that he was denounced as an infidel and blasphemer by the priests of his day.

Again you say. "There is generally a wild chaotic expression of eye about them awfully suggestive of abysmal thought and the cutting of scientific Gordian Knots. They carry their vests high up like their ears and confusion possesses their coats which are buttoned awry."

This is too ridiculous, Rev. Sir. But where you throw a dart, there I have a shield to catch, and a lance to cast in return.

I can readily call to mind numerous specimens of the black robed fraternity, whose facial configuration and cranial development was more suggestive of the prize ring than the pulpit, were it not for the aggregation of adipose cells in the *abdominal* and *lumbar regions*, which totally precludes all idea of their possessing the necessary activity ; and completes a *tout ensemble* which if stripped of its hybrid garments, I make bold to affirm would astonish Jehovah himself and be totally unrecognisable as a specimen of the genus man which the Bible tells us He manufactured in Eden in His own image six thousands years ago.

Your silly talk about the Free Thinker wearing his ears "high up," loses all force—even if true—coming from a man who must believe that his ears are in the situation his almighty Designer decreed they should occupy. Besides. Reverend Sir, this association of ears with intelligence smacks strongly of belief in phrenology. You are tainted with heresy, Rev. Sir.

Again your Reverence says. "Pray Messieurs, what is matter? What is substance? What is the distinction—the real distinction—between matter and force? Can you explain what matter and substance is? No you cannot here in the presence of a thing visible and palpable you are brought to a gaping standstill, and yet you turn around and dare to deny God, on the ground that the existence of the Almighty is unreasonable. Poor pigmies, what asses, as well as blasphemers your pride and petty brains make of you, etc."

I will content myself for the present with asking your Reverence a few questions in return, imitating as closely as our unaided infidel ignorance will permit, the inspired style of which the above quotation is a mild sample.

The Priest talks glibly about "God," "Pure Spirit," "Created Spirit," etc. *ad nauseum*. Pray Messieurs *les interpréteurs* what do you *know* about God? Come now! No dodging the question with some of your long winded sophistries but give us a plain honest answer if you can.

Again, ye buds of divinity tell us what is the distinction—the real distinction—between pure spirit and created spirit? What is *spirit* anyhow? If God is "Being simply" according to St. Thomas, what is He according to some of the earlier saints and fathers of the church?

Of what did this pure spirit make the Universe? Did he make it out of something, or out of nothing? But some thing cannot come from nothing you will admit; therefore he made it out of something. If so! How came this something to be in existence?

Now, is it not more reasonable to believe that this boundless Universe with its inherent forces eternally existed, without beginning, without end, rather than believe than an infinite something awoke from an eternal coma six thousand years ago and broke the breathless, cheerless, silence of limitless space by speaking countless millions of whirling solar systems into existence?

Again, ye heavenly insurance agents. When this infinite something created the Universe did he place it inside of Himself, or outside of Himself? If you say outside of Himself, then you limit him and he is not infinite—if inside of Himself, then Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Angels, Devils, Saints, sinners, Stars, suns, moons, worlds, all that is, good and evil, bitter and sweet, patrician and pauper, master and slave, live, move, and have their being in the depths of his infinite bosom. Is not this the "good old pantheistic theory" which you say has been "exploded a thousand times."

Now then have at you! Is there one among the whole chanting crowd of "pretenders to more than human knowledge" who can answer those questions without quibbling? You know you cannot! And here with eighteen ghostly centuries of "*Roman Authority*" at your back, with brazen assertions yet on your lips, soothsayer, remitter of sins, as you are, the veriest child in your flock might bring you to a gaping standstill, were he free to use that reason which you would despise and crush.

Is it fair to ask your spiritual highnessess to give us some definite, direct, useful, manifestation of the power ye profess to represent?

We do not want stories of stars floating on the walls of out of the way chapels, we do not seek for filmy apparitions of departed saints or mythical Virgins who bear a strong resemblance to the plaster creations of itinerant vendors of holy images, you need not resuscitate Lazarus or lodge Jonah in the stomach of a whale, we do not want appeals to the past, unsubstantiated by evidence, that is evidence.

What we ask for is a manifestation of that power which you claim to wield in the name of Deity, not a manifestation to appease a feverish curiosity, but a manifestation that would be a blessing to mankind and at the same time a



- living proof of the truth of your assumptions. If not too bold I would suggest that there is a magnificent opportunity for and a dire need of such manifestation in Ireland to day.

Poor unhappy faithful Ireland ! If ever a people deserved the untiring efforts of the priests in their behalf: the Irish are that people.

Will the God your Reverence represents answer an appeal ? Is there any efficacy in prayer ? If there is, and you teach that there is, will your Reverence tell us why God has not helped his faithful Irish children ?

Has He not been invoked enough ? If not I hope your Reverence will lose no time in *sending up* such a petition as the urgency of the case demands.

Though not skilled in those matters, perhaps the following prayer will meet the needs of the case and the approval of your Reverence ?

Oh Heavenly Father of a long suffering people ! We approach thy throne tremblingly, hopefully, prayerfully. Tremblingly lest we have unconsciously merited thy wrath, hopefully because we know that thou hast the power to grant our request, prayerfully because thou hast promised to hearken to our call. Deign then oh merciful master of an enslaved people, to lend a listening ear to the supplication of thy devoted servants who hope thou wilt graciously remember their past services in the interests of the church, which thou didst come down from thy abode in the skies to establish. We humbly beg to remind thee that we have worked early and late to erect expensive altars on which thousands of candles are daily consumed to thy greater glory. We respectfully submit that our horny hands have supplied the many tuns of wine which thy priests have consumed in commemoration of thee.

Deign then oh August presence ! to bestow a few moments consideration on the case of thy faithful children of the Isle of Saints, who have ever remembered thee, even when in great strait and dire need, they have never ceased to glorify thee, in songs of praise, and offerings of gold and silver. Thou knowest how we have been robbed, despoiled, starved, and exiled. Thou didst send down chilling rain and snows from heaven, on our unsheltered heads, as we lay shivering evicted and homeless by the way-side, yet have we blessed thy name.

Thou hast seen us year after year exiled from the loved land of our birth, impoverished, heart broken, fever stricken wanderers in strange lands ; Thou hast impassively listened for seven hundred years to the agonized supplications of our people who have vainly petitioned thee to ameliorate their condition. We are in sore want, our name is a by word in the mouth of the ungodly—

Some even reproach us with thy neglect—saying “help thyself, the gods are helpless.” Pity then the sad plight of thy servants, who are at their wits end to reconcile thy power and benevolence with thy silence and inactivity.

Confound the ungodly and raise the hearts of the faithful by manifesting thy power in favor of thy Irish children, grant thy priests fresh arguments—which they sadly need—to meet the assaults of the unbeliever, and we will glorify thy name for ever and ever. Amen.

But after all, Rev. Sir, judging from past experience, I am afraid that the people themselves will have to fight the battle without aid from on high. Heaven smiles serenely while the blood of the people pays the price of liberty.

But the apex of the pyramid of nonsense you present under the name of a lecture is reached in what you gravely tell us “will relieve a rather dry subject, and prove the real worth of Atheism at the supreme moment which tests all theories.”

I cannot spare either time or space to give a full quotation of this refreshing production with which your Reverence closes so abruptly "The infidelity of the present day."

But I will give an outline of the thing which your Reverence makes a standard to test all theories.

First we have a person, whom your Reverence says "we will call Thos. Telfer," and whom I will take the liberty to call T. T. T. T. is a "professed unbeliever and an excellent horseman" and has dodged the duties of this life; in short T. T. is the heavy villain.

Next we have a young married lady with "respectable connections and hitherto irreproachable reputation," the bone of contention. Then we have the husband of the young married lady. He is the possessor of a white furious face, and is mentally and physically, head and shoulders above the villain T. T. This is the fierce avenger, "Those worthies lived in a "pretty canadian town" situated anywhere you please.

Act. 1.—The "dilletante" T. T. furnishes some "marvellous reasons" to the respectable married lady, upon which she decides to leave the intellectual husband and fly with T. T.—Tableau. They fly.

Act. 2.—Gay steamer, merry crowd, T. T. the life of the party. Steamer approaches wharf; T. T. in the bar, suddenly a "white furious face bursts through the crowd," T. T. sees it and throwing himself on "*his hands and knees rushes* for the door, too late—bang! a pistol shot, and T. T. shrieking Oh! God I'm shot, gives up the ghost," thus "on the brink of the Abyss his soul asserted its maker."

This is a refreshing story certainly, and it furnishes another proof of the desperate straits you are reduced to, in order to bolster up the baseless imposition you represent.

It causes a smile to spread over ones face to read of the man who had nerve enough to beard the lion in his den, the white face in his lair, going down on his *hands and knees* in order to reach the door more quickly.

Was the moon at the full when you wrote the conclusion of your lecture, Rev. Sir? Zeal for your cause, Rev. Sir, has strangled what reason your one sided education had left you.

The fact is, that after being on the war path for three weeks without taking a single scalp, your ammunition spent, you seize a straggling jackdaw, deck it up in peacock feathers, label it Thos. Telfer, and vanish from our sight behind the expanded tail of your own creation.

This venerable dodge of imposing on the unwary by stories offsetting the sound reasons and solid arguments of health, by the weak wanderings of second childhood on the bed of death, is most effectively wielded by theologians, who by appealing to the fear of the people, paralyse the reason of those who have not investigated the question for themselves. Let us suppose for the sake of argument that this "staggering bob" of a story is probable. What then? Does the dying exclamation of Thos. Telfer furnish evidence of the authenticity of the gospels? Or the infallibility of the Pope? Does it reconcile the genealogy of Christ in Matthew with the genealogy of Christ in Luke or either of them, with the statement that he is the son of God? Nay more, God himself. You might as well tell me that the soul of the man who yelled "Great God Almighty"—when he struck his finger instead of the nail he was driving—was asserting his maker, as to make the dying exclamation of your straw man do duty for a confession of faith,

Again, supposing for an instant that this story has a particle of truth in its composition—as we are left totally in the dark as to how your Reverence got

the knowledge of the exact doings and sayings of Thos. Telfer—what does it prove?

Here we have a story of a man who, an unbeliever himself, necessarily lived among and kept the company of believers—

Now unless T. T. had retired to the wilderness, or shunned the company of his christian friends altogether, he could not possibly help becoming familiar with all those devout exclamations and pious interjections which decorate the christian vocabulary.

I need not point out to your Reverence the prevalent and almost universal use in Christendom,—and “pretty Canadian towns” are not behind the age in this respect—of the words “Oh God!” “By God!” “Jesus Christ!” “I’ll be damned!” “Holy Virgin!” etc. with an almost infinite number of variations and combinations. That T. T. in his daily intercourse with the intellectual husband, the hitherto irreproachable lady, and their high connections,—nay, probably in early years a christian himself—had acquired the habit of using some of the above exclamations is not to be wondered at; but that any of those exclamations wrung by sudden pain from the sufferers lips, should furnish proof of the divine origin of christianity is a wonder indeed.

Let me submit to the consideration of your Reverence an extract from the death bed reflections of Austin Holyoake, who died in London. April 10th 1874, of whom it was said “from duty he never shrank, from responsibility he never swerved.” A few hours before death he said “Christians constantly tell Free Thinkers that their principles of *negation*, as they call them, may do very well for health; but when the hour of sickness and approaching death arrives they utterly break down, and the hope of a *blessed immortality* can alone give consolation.”

“In my own case I have been anxious to test the truth of this assertion and have therefore deferred to the latest moment I think it prudent, to dictate these few lines. For twenty years past my mind has been entirely free from misgivings or apprehensions as to any future states of rewards or punishments. I do not believe in the christian Deity, nor in any form of so called supernatural existence. I cannot believe in that which I cannot comprehend.

I shall be accused of presumption in expressing disbelief in an idea which has commanded the faith of some of the best intellects for centuries past. This I cannot help. I must think for myself; and if each of those great men had been asked to define his God, it may safely be predicted that no two would have agreed.”

I may also be reminded that “the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.” This would imply thought, and it is doubtful whether a fool ever thought on the subject at all, but his idea of a deity if it could be got at would no doubt be as coherent as most other men’s. Many fools have written and spoken as though they had penetrated the secrets of the inscrutable, and many wise men have lost their reason by endeavouring to solve the insoluble; and the world remains as ignorant on the subject as it did at the earliest dawn of civilization.

“I do not believe in a Heaven, or life of eternal bliss after death. There is nothing in the world to induce me to give credence to the possibility of such a state of existence.”

“An eternal Hell seems to me too monstrous for the belief of any humane man or sensitive woman, yet millions believe in it. Like Heaven, it is enormously disproportionate to the requirements of the case; as man can never confer benefits deserving an eternal reward, so it is impossible to commit sins deserving eternal punishment.”

"As I have before stated, my mind being free from any doubts on those bewildering matters of speculation I have for twenty years experienced the most perfect mental repose; and now I find that the near approach of death, the grim King of Terrors gives me not the slightest alarm. I have suffered and am suffering most intensely night and day, but this has not produced the least change of opinion. No amount of bodily suffering can alter a mental conviction. Those who under pain say they see the error of their previous belief, had never thought out the problem for themselves."

The last sentence in the above quotation dictated just seven years before you built the effigy you call Thos. Telfer, gives effectual answer to all those so-called death bed recantations of anonymous individuals which are continually happening no one knows where.

And then your Reverence speaking of the Free Thinkers says "They are faithful to the oft repeated injunction of Voltaire 'lie, lie, something will stick.'" The brazen effrontery of this assertion, Rev. Sir, is only equalled by the plentiful lack of evidence to substantiate it. I challenge you for proof that Voltaire ever used those words in the sense you attribute to them. Give us the context and keep from making a wry face if you can. No, no, Father Graham, Voltaire the poet, the wit whose biting satire and scathing denunciation of titled frauds, and priestly shams, earned for himself the hatred of nobility and priesthood, and caused him to be twice imprisoned ere he had reached the age of forty, may have put those words on Jesuit lips, but in the sense you give them I deny.

But Voltaire is dead!—

A jackass kicked a lion once!—

But the lion was dead!—

Sic transit gloria Graham!

Once more your Reverence says "I turn over the page of human annals and find Atheism a black and ominous blot—at intervals in the world's history."

The only evidence your Reverence offers to prove the blackness of Atheism is, that "it excited discontent in the masses, and whispered soft flatteries in the ear of kings. Sang in the sublime numbers of Homer, and darkened the smooth rhythm of Virgil. Laughed with the easy genius of Horace, and threw off the mask with Propertius," besides doing a number of equally black and sinful things, all of which you say "proves its origin and mission,—viz, "the devil's guerilla warfare against the majesty of the Most High, and the immortal interests of mankind."

The devil—has—cropped—up—again.

You seem to forget, Rev. Sir that if the devil carries on a guerilla warfare against the majesty of the most High" and the "immortal interests" of mankind are at stake, that your church teaches that the most High graciously permits your *friend* the devil to carry on such warfare, that in fact it is the will of God.

If his Majesty so wished he might at any moment annihilate the devil and Atheism would cease as a natural consequence. If the "immortal interests," of his Majesty's children are at stake, and if he cared a button for said "immortal interests," he would fore-close with the devil at once.

Dodge and evade the question as you will, your Most High is the fore knowing author of all things; if you say that he made the devil good but that he fell through pride, then the devil was no less the deliberate creation of your most High because he endowed the angel with pride, which caused his fall, and He knew millions of ages before he created him what misery and suffering would ensue in consequence.

Surrounded by the boundless nothing from which he created all things, communing with himself from eternity, he saw unfolding out of the infinite

darkness, the Hells overcrowded with sufferers, while the mansions of Heaven had "Rooms to Let" pasted over every door.

Before there was an atom in existence He saw the misery, the slavery, the wars, the massacres, the burnings, the persecutions, the famines and plagues, the earthquakes and avalanches, spreading desolation and suffering over one little planet in his Universe.

He saw all this from *eternity* the priest tells us, and then has the bare-faced presumption to say He is a "pure act" and could not possibly create evil.

If He is a pure act, why did he create pride, which was tantamount to creating the devil honestly and fairly at once?

If this Most High wished to have a devil He is not all good, if He did not want a devil and got one, his intentions wishes or plans are at fault and He is not all wise nor all powerful.

Again, Reverend Sir, I ask you in the name of humanity—Why dont God kill the devil and thus make us all good catholics at once?

There is only one answer to this question. He either wants to and cannot, or he can and will not. Twist and turn it how you will there is no escaping this fact which your Reverence can meditate on at your leisure.

If atheism appears like a "black blotch on the page of human annals." Where shall we find a depth of blackness that will not appear as the driven snow when compared with the massacres, intrigues, and abominations, which hang like the mud-bedraggled tail of a kite to the history of your Church?

I might tell of the squabbling of the early christians. How Eutychians, Nestorians, Arians and others too numerous to mention, disputed on this attribute of God and on that attribute of God. How like the "six blind men of Hindostan" they disputed long and loud about things of which they knew absolutely nothing, how they excited the people who often joined issue in sanguinary conflict to decide some knotty theological point. How Bishops murdered one another in their struggle for power. I might add to this a record of your Popes, of the murders, intrigues, and conspiracies, of which the successors of Peter have been guilty, how Formosus who had been excommunicated for conspiring to murder Pope John the eighth, was elected Pope in A. D. 891. How this same Formosus was taken from the grave by Pope Stephen the second, clothed in the papal garments, propped in a chair, tried before a council and the indecent scene completed by cutting off three fingers of the corpse and casting it into the Tiber.

This same Stephen was thrown into prison and strangled and the culminating point was reached when in A. D. 1045 the papacy was put up at auction and knocked down to Gregory the sixth. \*

In the words of J. W. Draper in his "Intellectual Development of Europe," "more than a thousand years had elapsed since the birth of our Saviour, and such was the condition of Rome. Well may the historian of those times shut the annals in disgust, well may the heart of the christian sink within him at such a catalogue hideous of crimes."

With this quotation I will leave the abusive phase of your lecture. Principles and not personalities should be discussed. I have followed your silly abuse thus far simply to show that in gratifying your passion for abuse you but weaken the cause you seek to defend.

You furnish another proof of the "Law of Heredity," the customs and habits of eighteen centuries of christian dogmatism, and violent anathema, have been transmitted to you, is bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh.

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\* Draper's Int. Dev. of Europe.



We can but pity you.

Had you been born in Turkey, of Mohammedan parents; we would no doubt find you brandishing a scimeter and howling "there is no God but Allah, and Mahomet is his Prophet," ready and willing to skewer every dog of a christian who would dare differ with your religious convictions.

You are the result of past causes, and present surroundings; evolute, Rev. Sir, and the next time you discuss modern infidelity please remember that there is nothing either manly or honest in calumniating an opponent.

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And now, Rev. Sir, having disposed of the devilish and abusive phases of your lecture, I cheerfully turn to consider that phase in which you at least make some effort at argument.

But before doing so I will notice sundry assertions which your Reverence makes. You say that the "uneducated with catholic faith cannot be deceived by a pompous assertion; they may not reach the particular sophism, but their catholic instincts are on the alert, and it doesn't stand to reason." I am pleased to find that on this point we agree.

There is such a thing as "catholic instinct" and it is a demonstrated fact, that "it doesn't stand to reason." Standing to reason is the last thing it ever thinks of doing. Had it ever stood to reason, how much whiter might have been the page of christian history.

Catholic instinct turns men, who may in all other respects be good members of society, into ruffians eager for the blood of their fellow man. Going no further than our own City and our own time we find distinct traces of what catholic instinct can do. Catholic instinct pointed the revolvers which robbed young Hackett of his life in Victoria Square, catholic instinct lay waiting with bloody thought and deadly arms at the Wellington Bridge, the darkness of the night a fitting symbol of the black fanaticism which enshrouds it; and Colligan lies a bloody corpse the mistaken victim of its hatred, and worse than all, catholic instinct has shielded the murderers from justice ever since.

Yes Father Graham! There is such a thing as catholic instinct and it don't and never did "stand to reason."

You say that "Protestantism is the mother of modern infidelity." No doubt, Rev. Sir, and were it not for the loss of power which the catholic church has suffered since the reformation, the Huxleys, the Spencers, and Mills would be summarily dealt with. However I leave it to the protestant to fight this part of your lecture. I have read protestant charges against catholicism, and catholic charges against protestantism, and after an impartial perusal of the history of both parties, one immediately arrives at the conclusion that *two black sheep* never yet constituted a white one. When protestantism shook off some of the delusions which arrogant "Roman Authority" imposes in the name of religion, men were unable to cast off the bigotry and fanaticism which sixteen centuries of priestly dominance had imbedded in their minds.

Though protestantism retains a good deal of the bigotry and persecuting spirit which was so carefully fostered in the mother church, yet to day it shows the mental vigour which is the result of even a step or two outside the limits prescribed by "Roman Authority."

Its ministers meet the unbeliever face to face, and man to man, and seek in intellectual combat to maintain their ground and are thus entitled to our respect.

Some of her ministers are even to be found battling side by side with the infidel for the rights of the people.

But where shall we find a priest who dares to meet the champions of free thought on the public platform?

I do not know of one, nor did I ever hear of one. They prefer to boast from the pulpit, where they are secure from answer of what they could do if they wished; or confine themselves to publishing their denunciations in the columns of newspapers that dare not accept anything in the shape of a reply.

And then you say that "the catholic Church is the objective point of attack; and that "in every atheistic onslaught, there is much enlarging on Galileo, the inquisition, the massacre of St. Bartholomew etc.," which you affirm to be "protestant slander and exploded lies." It would have been far more to your credit had you *proved* those *infernal* acts to be "protestant slander and exploded lies" instead of merely saying so, for with the enforced recantation of Galileo,—the thousand fires of the Inquisition—the "Te Deum" sung, and the "medal struck by Pope Gregory XIII, \* commemorative of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, staring you in the face, your assertion to the contrary is utterly worthless.

I have not met a single attempt at refutation of any of those historical facts that does not leave the impartial reader more than ever convinced of their truth, and of the vindictiveness with which the church wielded the power she possessed during the middle ages.

Again your Reverence says, "certainly the vagaries of the ancient skeptics were backed by genius, but ability seems not to be necessary to their modern representatives."

The same remark holds good of the ancient priests. They backed their assertions by miracles, cured the sick, prophesied, called fire from Heaven, cast out devils, turned sticks into snakes etc., but one can almost weep over the degeneracy of their modern representatives, who are perfectly impotent, and have such a poor reputation at the court of Heaven that they could not influence Jehovah to destroy the potato bug, or even alter its tastes to suit a different kind of diet; thistles for instance.

And now, Rev. Sir, let us consider the questions which you so vehemently put to the Free Thinker viz. "What is matter? What is Force? etc.

Matter, Rev. Sir. is everything we know of. Matter I believe to be the eternal self-existent, "Universal mother of all life, manifesting its latent powers in an endless variety of modes.

We know nothing of "force separate from matter. Matter and Force are coeternal.

But if your Reverence demands to know the very essence of those things, you are asking a question which neither Pope nor scientist can answer, and your Reverence will please remember, that while despising matter and claiming intimacy with its creator, with a so called infallible authority at your back, you must descend from the pedestal of pride and humbly acknowledge with the scientist that you also have no answer to those questions. In the words of an honest man Prof. John Tyndall "Let us lower our heads and acknowledge our ignorance, priest and philosopher, one and all."

Again you ask "What is space? Something or nothing? It is extended you must admit, very well then etc." and then after telling us that here again our boasted reason stands "paralysed and agape" you wind up the sentence by a flourish about the creator of "matter and space, and all things."

Well. Reverend Sir, I will deal with the question of "space" as far as my heretical dullness will permit.

"Space" is something or nothing. If space is nothing, it is non-existent, and but a waste of time to talk about it. But space exists you will admit, therefore space is something and here, Rev. Sir, you have an uncreated something which is indispensably necessary to the existence of all other things.

By no effort of the mind can we conceive of space as non-existent. Blot out the Universe, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, God himself, space still remains. Therefore space is absolutely independent of all other existences. Therefore when your Reverence says God is absolutely independent of all other things, you are attributing to God that which of right belongs to space alone, and when your Reverence talks of the great Creator of matter and space, you affirm that there was a time when space was not, to talk of God as creating space is to say that God like a geometrical point does not occupy space. That which does not occupy space is nothing. Therefore your "great creator is nothing. No doubt your Reverence will readily conceive of a god, living, being, existing before he had a quarter of an inch of space to live, be, or exist in; but I confess that this is more than our "shallow" conceptions will admit.

Give me one god, or a thousand gods if you will, Father Graham, but do not set him or them creating space or we part company at once.

But it is when your Reverence essays to deal with the question of evil in the world" that the inherent weakness of your hypothesis of an almighty, and all good intelligence, designing and governing the world, comes to the surface.

How lame the apologies, how inconclusive the arguments of those who try to reconcile the misery and suffering of the governed with the infinite goodness and power of the governor!

Faith and reason struggle for the mastery. Let me with all due respect, ask your Reverence, how a benevolent God can contemplate the sufferings of his children on earth with indifference?

For thousands of years he has watched the struggle for existence.

He has seen man pitted against man in battle. He has seen man butcher his fellow man and—sickening sight—he has seen man gorging himself with the flesh of his brother.

He has seen millions of his children perish in bloody wars, and cruel persecutions undertaken in his name and to his greater glory; yet he has not unmistakably manifested himself to his children. Even to day the Turk is ready to die in defence of "Islam," the Indian to lay down his life to "Juggernaut," and the sincere christian for "Christ." Yet heaven is silent! No voice from on high solves the problem.

Again let me ask your Reverence. Is it an intelligent force that causes a Lisbon earthquake or strews the Island of Chios with mangled bodies? Is it an intelligent force that sweeps the earth in the destructive tornado? Can we infer an intelligent force from the foundering of the "Captain" with five hundred souls on board?

Is it an intelligent force that launches the avalanche from the mountain top and sends it crashing through the peasant's humble roof, crushing alike the innocent babe and loving mother.

If you say an intelligent force causes those calamities, you will not in the face of earthquakes, plagues, famines, and inundations, assert that it is also a benevolent force.

It will not do on the hypothesis of an intelligent ordainer, to charge those calamities to the account of nature. There can be no half-God, half-nature government, it is either all god or all nature.

Surely, Rev. Sir, you will not tell us that an eruption of Vesuvius, or a tidal wave, are the results of the apple biting in Eden six thousand years ago,

You will hardly assert that man is blamable for the physical and mental suffering resulting from causes altogether beyond his control.

And yet your Reverence, with one of those cunning sophistries which are so potent with the faithful, seeks—in the following quotation—to show that man's self is to blame for the presence of Evil in the world.

You say "A man exposes himself unnecessarily to a severe storm, he catches cold—neglects it and dies of consumption. You his grand child, feeble and declining, may sometimes, when kept awake with a hacking cough feel disposed to grow impatient with your creator, and fretfully ask:—Why am I tortured thus? why is my young life to go out in its prime? Others are strong and robust while I have never known a day's health. My dear child, the difference between you and your robust neighbour is just this: your grandfather neglected the laws of health and your neighbour's did not."

On the hypothesis of a benevolent ordainer this is sorry consolation to the sufferer and rather a poor illustration of the love of God for his children, especially when we remember that the "grandfather" might have been exposed to the "severe storm" through no fault of his. He might have been on an errand of mercy, or he may have been a poor toiler trudging wearily home after a hard day's work, overtaken by the storm and no shelter at hand; and the consumption ensues just as surely as in the other case, the respective conditions being equal.

Here then we have physical evil descending through generations, irrespective of the wish to accept or avoid the exposure.

Your Reverence has in this case given a very good illustration of the law of heredity as regards predisposition to physical disease, and will you deny in the face of the facts to the contrary, that man does not inherit predisposition to drunkenness and crime; to mental as well as physical traits. In the words of Miriam Evans a free woman.

"What! shall the trick of nostrils and of lips  
Descend through generations, and the soul  
That moves within our frames like god in worlds,  
Imprint no record—leave no documents.  
Of her great history."

No! Rev. Sir, you cannot separate moral and physical evil—they go hand in hand—Poverty, disease, crime, Wealth, usury, oppression,—where one of those evils exist there also may be found the others.

Again, Rev. Sir, if the consumptive grandfather neglected the "laws of health," will you, as a *representative* of the *law-maker*, please tell us what are the "laws of health"? And where may they be found?

If the world is governed by a benevolent intelligent governor, how is it that after nearly two thousand years of intimate business relations with heaven, man is so ignorant of the "laws of health" to day?

Would not a merciful and loving God—as Col. Ingersol puts it—have made health catching instead of disease?

Is it not true—that scientific research, patient study profiting by experience, sanitary conditions, and medical treatment have done more to give man a knowledge of the laws of health, than all the prayers, processions, sacrifices, and ceremonials which have been offered up to Heaven for thousands of years?

You can not deny it Reverend Sir.

But in the changed attitude of the christian to day as compared with that of the past, we may trace a gradual evolution from a reliance on the "*Oaken* supernatural" to a reliance on the natural, plain and simple.

Deity after deity has been clothed in the attributes of nature. God after God has reign above the clouds, swaying the destinies of men, sending lightning from on high, breaking up the fountain of the deep, convulsing the earth in their wrath, and engulfing the children of men, crushing with inexorable impartiality the saint and the sinner. Altar after altar has been raised to their

glory, temple after temple dedicated to their worship. Martyr after martyr has sealed his belief with his blood. Yet to day those gods are dead, their altars thrown down, their temples in ruins, the martyrs forgotten, the worshipers no more. A new God sits on the celestial throne and history is repeating itself.

There have been jealous gods and angry gods, gods of battle and gods of peace, but all gods have been changeable gods, their ears have been open to the flatterer, and offerings of gold and silver have found favor in their eyes, their nostrils have found delight in the smell of the burnt offering; and their wrath is appeased by the shedding of blood.

Nature, and Nature only is ever the same, eternal, immutable, all embracing. Her epistles are carved on the rocks and her eternal gospels written in the heavens—deaf to the voice of prayer yet answering intelligent effort. In nature there is no good, no evil, there are results, there are consequences.

Ignorance of or non-adaptation to our environments produce results which we call evil, while adaptation to our surroundings produce results which we call good. Good and evil are relative terms. So long then as man neglects to study and adapt himself to those conditions which experience has prove to result in happiness and health, so long shall he suffer.

And now let me say that when your Reverence can answer the question "What is matter" etc., when you can produce force separate from matter, when you can show us mind without matter, when you can define what matter is, what mind is—when you can prove that matter, nature, *does not* possess the "promise and potency of all terrestrial life" then, and not until then, have you the right, to dogmatize about "the great creator of matter, space, and all things.

It is astonishing that any sane man should at this day advance the Mosaic cosmogony, with its snake-talking, apple-picking, Adam-exiling, God-repenting, deluge-drowning, rainbow-setting, Baron Munchausen-outdoing nonsense to account for the existence of the universe.

The book of Genesis, with its account of the creation temptation and fall, viewed in the light of a poetic essay, is worthy our respect and consideration, but when it is crammed down the throat of common sense as the production of God himself, we are alike disgusted with the book and its author and snap our fingers at the anathema of the holy Œcumenic council of Trent "in the Holy Ghost assembled" who said that God is the "immediate author of the old and new testament."

If ever there was blasphemy—outrageous blasphemy—it was when those pitiful misguided mortals, decked in tawdry arrogance decreed that God was the immediate author of the Bible.

The book itself gives the lie to the assertion for no god with half an ounce of sense would give such a description of himself as the Bible contains, and hope to obtain anything but the contempt of every honest man.

Let any man who can read, and understand what he reads, silence the fears with which the take care's! ah beware's! and oh my's! of the priest have fettered him—let him read that venerable snake story, let him read of the "great creator of matter and space and all things" *walking* in paradise at the afternoon air, let him compare this god in Genesis with the limitless, formless conception of Thos. Aquinas and reconcile them if he can.

Let him listen to this God in Genesis testifying to the truth of the serpents assertion that they should "be as gods." Hear him say "Behold Adam is become as one of us," and then imagine him trembling, lest Adam "stretch forth his hand and eat of the tree of life"—and thus become his immortal equal—casting him out of paradise.



Let him think a few minutes over the statement that "the sons of God went in to the daughters of men," how children were the result who were "the mighty men of old, men of renown."

Let him hear this God repenting, sorry, that he had made man and resolving to destroy every living thing, notwithstanding that a short time previously he had pronounced it all very good.

Let him read how Noah—the second father of the human race—who "found grace before the Lord" also found the means to get drunk, and lay helpless and indecent in his tent, a fit subject for a Recorder's Court.

And when he hears the curse pronounced on "Chanaan" and all hopes of a regenerated race fade from his mind, let him read the miserable sophistries tacked on in the shape of foot notes to this delectable account of creation, repentance, and destruction, and if he does not rise a free man with a full conviction that the Book of Genesis is a slander on the almighty and a libel on the infinite, it is because his reasoning faculties have become aborted, or have been battered out of shape by the iron mace of superstition.

Now with all respect for "Cuvier"—who by the by, did not believe in "Roman Authority," and was therefore, on the broad road to destruction—and while conceding to him all the admiration which his achievements command, we cannot draw the line where science halts even at his name.

To say there have been no scientific discoveries made or progress attained since Cuvier died, half a century ago is tantamount to saying that there has been no progress in the construction of locomotives since the days of George Stephenson.

How comes it, Rev. Sir, that you are forced to grope among past records for your evidence? Is it not an admission that the ever accumulating evidence on the scientific side grows stronger every day?

Besides, Cuvier sets the convulsions of nature—which is not a covering of the whole earth with water fifteen cubics above the highest mountain top, as the bible teaches—one, or two thousand years further back than the bible account.

A universal deluge such as the bible teaches would have the self same traces in all places—broadly speaking, but this is not the case, as it is evident from the examination of the deposits that they do not belong to the same periods of time, and the fact that in some cases they are fresh water, and in others salt water deposits.

But the speculations of Cuvier have nothing to do with the deluge recorded in the Bible; it must stand or fall on its own merits.

Now if the Bible is the "word of God" the statements therein made should fit the facts, and should give a true account of the causes of which the rainbow is the result.

Now, Rev. Sir, I venture to lay down the axiom, that any statement in the "word of God" which is contradicted by the "works of God" is false; and I heartily accept your axiom that "any system that endorses or uses a single sophism is false and erroneous."

Now your system, Rev. Sir, would have us believe that something less than four thousand years ago the rainbow made its debut in the heavens as a guarantee to the inhabitants of this pigmy planet that God would never more drown the world with water—which is after all not very consoling to those who object to cremation.

Now Father Graham I ask you as an honest man,—considering the facts that the rainbow is simply the refraction of the sun's rays in the falling rain drops, and that at the present day any school boy knows how to produce one whether you really believe that there was no rainbow before the deluge. assuming such to have taken place?

Do you mean to say that for two thousand years not a cloud, visible or invisible floated above the surface of our earth?

Do you mean to say that for two thousand years life was supported on this planet without a drop of water descending from the skies?

Do you honestly believe that green things grew on this earth before the sun was in existence?

Would you be so kind as to tell us in what *orbit* the earth moved, before the sun was created?

If God made the moon to rule the night, why does she not do so regularly?

Evolution being on your hypothesis, an absurdity, and the Bible teaching that the human family have descended from one couple only, will you please explain how is that we have so many different types of mankind in existence to day?

I hope your Reverence will not lay those divergencies of form and colour to the agency of "the devil" we must draw the line some where.

The fact is, Rev. Sir, that the rainbow and other phenomena of nature which the theologians have advanced to support their system, prove too much. In short, as science explains the phenomena of nature, tracing them one after the other to their primal causes, the rainbow, in its turn, once a witness for the priest, has turned state, Queen's evidence, and the Book of Genesis, the so-called word of God, stands convicted of error by the testimony of nature itself.

If this so-called word of God is a false witness at one point of the evidence how can we depend on it at any other point?

The Book of Genesis is the production of some dreamy, poetic soul, and as such is very nice, but unfortunately for you, not true.

This is so palpable that all intelligent christians, many of your fellow priests included, acknowledge that there is no evidence of a total deluge, and pin their faith to Bishop Colenso's "Inundation."

The Bible teaches a total, not a partial deluge, ergo the Bible is at variance with the evidence.

The deluge, as the Bible gives it, is an exploded humbug, a stumbling block in the way of progress, a disgrace to any god, and unworthy the belief of man, woman, or child.

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And now, Rev. Sir, I arrive at that portion of your lecture which you say you "approach with fear." Why do you fear, Rev. Sir? Surely the priest who consigns people to hell, absolves sinners, frees the souls in purgatory, and talks generally as if he was the earthly end of a telephonic connection with heaven should not fear when he approaches the subject of deity.

If any man should be able to answer questions or defend his faith, the priest should be that man.

Had the priest satisfactory answers to give to the honest inquirer there would be no infidelity to complain of; for to say that any man would reject satisfactory evidence of a belief on which his future happiness depended is to say what is contrary to common sense.

Therefore I suspect Rev. Sir, that this assertion of your approaching this portion of your subject with fear is put with the object of raising fear in the minds of your hearers, thus inviting that mental state which is best suited for absorbing any nonsense your Reverence may think fit to administer in the name of God.

Now what in the Universe is there to fear? Of what are you afraid? You say God is a good God—a pure spirit—infinite in love and knowledge, power, and benevolence. Now a God who knows all things must know how ignorant mankind is—the clergy included—in all things pertaining to himself. He knows that millions are going to hell yearly because the evidence which his disciples offer is largely anonymous, unreliable, and contrary to the reason he himself has endowed them with.

Being a “pure act,” infinitely good, he would be impelled by his very nature to reveal himself to his children so that they could not err in his identity. Just, merciful, benevolent, he would not consign his own creatures to an endless torture for using the reason he conferred upon them, and following the truth wherever the truth may lead.

Therefore, Rev. Sir, there is no cause for fear. A good God will not, a just God cannot blame the man who seeks to understand before believing, rather than believe without understanding.

It is not a question of the existence of one God, or more, or none, it is a question of whether there was, is, or ever shall be a human being who did, does, or ever shall know anything about God, the Eternal, the Inscrutable, call it what you will.

We have on this planet a man who claims to represent the creator of the millions of suns and systems that move in limitless space. A “legitimate successor” of the vacillating Peter who denied his master in his hour of trial. A microscopic organism, comparatively speaking. A would be ruler of the earth. A granter of indulgences. A Pope—“The God of the Vatican.”

To ask this little God or his subordinates how it is that with benevolence, power, and knowledge personified in the ruler; anarchy, oppression, and injustice are permitted to prosecute the ruled, is surely reasonable.

What proofs can the Vatican God or his representatives offer in support of their claims? Can they perform a miracle? Not one! though their word of God asserts that “these signs shall follow them.” Can they drink poisonous mixtures with impunity, and are serpents harmless in their hands?

No! though the word of God declares that these signs also shall follow them. Can this Pope or his representatives point to a single authenticated instance where they have benefitted mankind by any other than human means, suggested by reason, observation, and experience? No!

Is the so-called Unity of this system a proof of its divine origin, or superiority over other systems? No! It is simply a result of discipline. The German or British army, furnish like results, merely because the many are machines in the hands of the few. Where man is, there is divergency of opinion; where freedom is, this divergency will find expression in speech; but where men “*think in herds*” and follow lines of thought laid down by persons long since deceased, there will be found that semblance of unity, which is attained by no other than human means. Therefore the Unity of the church is no proof whatever of its divine origin.

In fine, Rev. Sir, have you any real knowledge of God? Answer honestly, yes or no. You admit that the finite cannot grasp the infinite. Why not be honest at once and acknowledge that you know nothing about the infinite?

It is then without fear that I proceed to examine some of your statements.

Your reverence says “God is a pure Spirit, or speaking more exactly according to St. Thomas, God is simply Being. Now human speech has no adequate expression for God or his attributes, because human speech is the “manifestation of human thought, which is necessarily finite. When we say “God is Being simply, the human mind is able to remove from the idea of God “everything that is irreconcilable with that definition; but the definition itself

"remains infinitely beyond our comprehension. We can apprehend the definition but shall never comprehend it."

You assert that God is a "pure Spirit" or "more exactly" according to St. Thomas, Being simply.

This assertion suggests a few questions.

How do you know God is a "pure Spirit?" or how did St. Thomas know "more exactly" that God is "Being simply."

And why chose St. Thomas rather than some of the earlier saints and fathers, Rev. Sir?

Am I to infer from your choice of St. Thomas that the "church was left for thirteen centuries without an exact definition of God?"

Or, Father dear, had you lived prior to St. Thomas, would you have defined God differently?

And, why, pray, do you chose the speculations of St. Thomas rather than the Bible definition?

Do not the conclusions of St. Thomas closely resemble the conclusions of Aristotle?

Your Reverence says "God is Being simply" and that "the mind can remove everything that is irreconcilable with that definition, but the definition itself remains infinitely beyond our comprehension."

What a convincing proof of the existence of Deity we have here! In the one breath you assert God to be a "pure Spirit," and in the next tell us that a "pure Spirit" is utterly unthinkable for when the "human mind" has removed "everything that is irreconcilable with that definition" there is nothing left in the mind, and when you say it is infinitely beyond our comprehension" you say that we do not, nor ever shall know anything about God.

Again if "human speech has no adequate expression for God or his attributes" how can you presume to dogmatize about God? to say "this is God's wish" or that "is God's will"?

Of what arrogant presumption you are guilty when you say to the atheist "away to the hell which awaits you."

How sinful, how utterly indefensible is the position of the priest, who knowing that he has neither conception of, nor speech to express the attributes of God, yet speak of, and dogmatize about him as if he were his next door neighbour. What the priest wishes, God wishes; they are one and inseparable.

Is it not strange that your Reverence does not arrive at the conclusion that had God wished man to talk about him, he would have given him the necessary power to do so?

Then your Reverence mentions the "idea of God" but an "idea" is something that we understand—partially at least—and is conceivable by the mind. If you have an idea of God it was your duty to present that idea. But you have no such idea for when every thinkable thing is removed from the mind there remains an utter blank.

But let us compare some of the conceptions of the early christian fathers and apologists,\* with the conception of St. Thomas.

"Justin Martyr ascribes to God shape and locality, without describing the shape or locality; he considered it heresy to hold that the soul is taken up to heaven; and holds that men rise with the same bodies."

"Tatian held that there are two spirits in the universe, manifesting themselves in individual varieties of form. At one time they lived in union, but the lower spirit became disobedient and sought a baser fellowship with matter,

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\* ~~Body~~ Body and Mind.—*Bain's*

yet after all, when reunited as in man with the higher spirit it becomes immortal."

Maximus could not accept the immensity of God, because he could not conceive how two substances could exist together in the same space."

"Plotinus agrees with Plato; the One or the Good is the primary essence from which all things have sprung."

"Clement of Alexandria says a positive knowledge of God is impossible; we only know what he is not." He was no doubt as near the mark as any.

"Origen holds that God is absolutely incorporeal, yet further remarks that the word incorporeal is not to be found in scripture, and that spirit strictly speaking means body."

"Tertullian, held that Deity was a pure luminous æther diffused everywhere. What is not body is nothing. Who shall deny that God is a body though he be a spirit?

Here we have the views of some of the early christian fathers; and we are tempted to exclaim, what unity of opinion, what harmony of ideas exist between those learned doctors of the one true church!

True some irreverent person forgetting that it is a mortal sin to ask questions which the priest find difficulty in answering, might demand which if any, of those learned and holy men is right?

And in our own day we have the eloquent Father Thos. Burke ringing changes on the same subject after this fashion:—"Until the sin of Adam God loved to *come down* to walk in the garden of Eden; and in the evening when the sun was slowly sinking in the west, God loved to *walk* in the groves of Paradise with his unfallen creature man."

Now here is a conception of God, strictly in accordance with the Book of Genesis. An anthropomorphic God, with body and parts, walking and talking, working and resting, going up and coming down, angry one moment, tender the next, creating, repenting, destroying, the incarnation of an earthly despot.

And further on he says "The first effect of the sin of Adam was the loss of Almighty Gods presence. God came again, once, and only once, and then he spoke in anger. He left the inheritance of a curse behind him. Then he withdrew into his high heaven. Here it is again, the Bible Jehovah, the conception of a God like a great man. And this is the kind of God that has been preached to the people, the angry God, the jealous God, the earthly king on the heavenly throne surrounded by the wise men; with countless hosts singing his praises, glorifying him to his face, shouting eternal flatteries in his ears; selling his favors, a patron of the deceitful and a hater of simplicity, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" says this God, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," in fact a very select quality of God, as the editor of "Truth" puts it. "Great God, what a God!

And the people have worshipped this God! A God who delights in bloody sacrifices, and glories in glittering altars! This is the God with whom the people have shared their hard earned dollars, building magnificent temples in his honor, subscribing in the name of this saint and in the name of that, while their own homes are miserable and they go dirty to church on Sunday for want of a public bath in which to wash their bodies.

But now that the people are waking from their long sleep, they are beginning to ask themselves, the question "is it all true?" They feel, rather than know that there is something wrong; printing, electricity, steam—annihilating time and space—putting the news of the world in their hands each day, shortening the hours of labour, making them acquainted with distant countries and peoples, giving them truer conceptions of past races and religions, their ears are open



to the prophecy that the day is not far distant when man controlling the forces of nature shall be a stranger to slaving toil. And now when the people have succeeded to a great extent in burrying the ghost, the witches, and the fairies—now that they are beginning to cross examine this God of Genesis, the priests are introducing the limitless, formless, incomprehensible God of Thos. Aquinas.

But it has always been so ; there has been a God for the priest and a God for the people. Think of this Infinite, Limitless, Formlessness, deriving pleasure from the light of wax condles and the burning of incense !

If God is limitless without form, pervading heaven and earth, he must be in heaven and in earth, in purgatory and in Hell, in man and beast, in all things, for to say there is a spot where God is not, is to limit him ; he ceases to be infinite.

And then, God is a pure act and cannot possibly create evil. This assertion may be satisfactory to some, but I confess that to my mind there is not the least difference in the case of an almighty and all-knowing God creating evil at once and creating the possibility of evil, with the certain knowledge that evil would result.

What would you say of a man who should place his children to play in a garden, knowing there was a deadly rattlesnake at liberty within its boundaries ?

Would a Coroner's jury exculpate him when, confronted with their swollen corpses, he sought to defend himself by saying, "oh I told them not to approach the shady part of the garden under penalty of being bitten" ?

No, Rev. Sir, there is not a man or woman, who would not despise him, nay hold him guilty of wilful murder.

And this is just what this Bible God did. He knew that the devil was in Eden, he knew he was after no good, he had kicked him out of Heaven, and will you tell me in the name of Heaven what he let him into paradise for, if it was not a necessary part of that divine plan of salvation which no doubt occupied the divine mind during the countless ages which preceded creation.

But the "word of God" contradicts the assertion that God does not create evil. Here are a few quotations from his own Book. "I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil : I the Lord do all these things." (Isa. 45 C. 7 v.) and again in the 2nd epistle of Paul to the Thes. 2 C. 10 v. "Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe a lie."

Again, 3 Kings 22 C. 22-23 v. "And he said I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said : Thou shalt deceive him, and shalt prevail : go forth and do so."

"Now therefore behold the Lord hath given a lying spirit in the mouth of all thy prophets that are here ; and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee."

"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh King of Egypt." Ex. 14 C. 8 v.

"And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians to pursue you."

"And when the prophet shall err, and speak a word : I the Lord have deceived that prophet."

Here are but a few of the sayings of this "pure act," who "cannot possibly create evil." Why he glories in it, he exults in it. "Shall there be evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it."

"I make peace and create evil, I the Lord do all these things." He actually boasts of it, yet your Reverence says he is a pure act and cannot possibly create evil" and would no doubt wriggle out of the dilemma by miserable sophistries such as : "Oh God dont exactly create evil, or put lies in a persons mouth, he merely permits evil spirits to do so, that is, he makes a lie appear as truth, but only of course to those who do not believe the priest.

Out upon such a caricature of a God, who at one moment is rejoicing over the repentant sinner, and the next sending him "the operation of error" that he may believe a lie!

And it is the belief in such a God as this that has induced the people to swallow the blasphemies your church has perpetrated under the name of invocation of the Saints, or prayer by proxy, granting indulgences, remission of sins, infallibility etc.

But when pushed by intelligent inquiry, or the growing thought of the day, this wretched conception of a God disappears and the unknowable God of Thos. Aquinas takes its place and we no longer recognise the blood-loving Jehovah. The golden throne, the bearded patriarchs, the angel choir, the cherubins and seraphins (whatever they may be) all fade from sight. With this conception of God. Jesus, Mary,—those who have been transported to heaven body and bones, come tumbling back to earth; there is neither right hand, nor left hand, before nor behind, above nor below. It is no longer "our Father who art in heaven" but Our Father who art everywhere in and through all things. And then, Rev. Sir, what do you know, nay how can you know anything of such a God? How can you with truth say God is this, or that, when on your own admission God is unthinkable? Would it not be more consistent, more humble, to acknowledge your ignorance, and devote some of your time to the investigation of an all-embracing Nature, from whose bosom you have sprung into conscious being, and into whose bosom you and I and every other being must return.

#### THE DESIGN ARGUMENT.

I see that your Reverence has wound up "Paley's watch" and given us the usual dose of design. Your Reverence says "tell a savage who has never seen a watch that it made itself, and he will treat you to a smile of contempt." True, Rev. Sir, and you might proceed to explain to this same savage that the watchmaker had cut the wheels, great and small, out of a lump of nothing, and he would probably believe you, though you would be telling an untruth; but if you tell the savage who has never heard of the telegraph or telephone that you can converse with a person two thousand miles distant, he would doubtless brand you a liar though you were telling the truth. Such arguments may have weight with savage or superficial minds, but they do not appeal to intelligence. And again, Rev. Sir, I am inclined to think that if your savage found a watch in running order,—or noticing the moving hands and hearing the ticking noise—he would "bow down and humbly adore" it.

Now if there is any parity or resemblance between Nature and a watch, there is the same parity or resemblance between a Universemaker and a watchmaker.

Now if the Universemaker can build a world out of nothing, a watchmaker can make a watch out of nothing.

If you will not compare God to a watchmaker, do not compare Nature to a watch.

To say that Nature furnishes evidence of a designing intelligence, is to say that necessity or want existed in the designer previous to the design, which is the means to an end, to supply the necessity or want which he must have felt.

Thus, man, to supply his need of a time measure contrived, designed and constructed the watch. But the metals out of which the watch is constructed previously existed; he merely cuts, hammers and fits them together in the form of a watch, the component parts of which, as to substance cannot be destroyed.

To impute design to the Infinite is to say that the Infinite needs or wants, which is absurd. If you say that an Almighty intelligence designed the Universe, then everything that is, is so because the design is so: that is, all the visible forms of matter, life, etc., is but the manifestation of the pre-existing design.

It needs but a few minutes thought to convince ourselves that the suffering, torment, and misery existing on our planet, is far in excess of the happiness, and therefore does not imply benevolence in the designer.

What torments are imposed daily on millions of living creatures to supply our stomachs with food? "What!" I hear your Rev. say "would you compare man to a beast?" though in some cases the beast might not be complimented by the comparison, such is not my intention, but I do say that if its life is designed to be sacrificed to support ours, that indifference to susceptibility to pain in man and beast, furnishes scanty proof of a benevolent designer.

Vegetables and plants derive their life and growth from the soil, sun, and atmosphere. Worms, locusts, potato bugs, etc. destroy vegetation. The larger animals, birds and fishes destroy the smaller ones and sometimes man himself. While man destroys them all in the struggle for life and in turn becomes food for the lower forms of life.

But it is not only in death that man is preyed upon, for in life his stomach furnishes an habitation for different kinds of worms, whose existence is often purchased at the price of his, while dozens of varieties of disgusting parasites suck his blood, bite, and burrow in his skin, helping to make life miserable, to say nothing of cancers, malformations, monstrosities, etc. which your Reverence will have difficulty in proving are evidence of benevolent design.

"Whoever" says Giebel, "expects to find in nature nothing but wisdom, conformity, and design, let him exercise his acumen in the study of the natural history of the tapeworm; the main object of its life consists in the production of eggs, the development of which can only be effected by the sufferings of other creatures."

What evidence of intelligent, benevolent design can your Reverence find in the Siamese twins, or in that type of humanity known by the name of "Aztec;" counterparts of whom may be found in nearly every town and village on our globe?

Your Reverence can not say that those monstrosities are the effect of sin, or the work of the devil, because monstrous phenomena are met with in man, beast, bird, and even in the vegetable kingdom.

What evidence of benevolent design can your Reverence find in wolves, tigers, cobras, anacondas, Boa Constrictors, rats, wasps, vampires, and the hundreds of other dangerous and deadly reptiles, insects, and animals, from whose depredations and attacks man must be ever on the alert to protect himself?

Is it with deep and fervent feelings of gratitude to a benevolent designer that the industrious farmer offers, as a burnt offering, the pan-ful of potato bugs which he has just picked off the plants in his potato patch?

Does it manifest faith in a good God, when we see whole communities turn out to destroy his creations?

Has not man in his struggle for existence been obliged to set a price on the heads of destructive animals that have at times threatened his very existence?

Is not man obliged to make laws to protect useful animals from becoming extinct?

Does not the action of man, in protecting some, and exterminating other species, show an utter want of confidence in the benevolence and power of the creator?

To the believer in Nature, Nature furnishes no evidence of a super-natural designing intelligence. Nature herself is "Alpha and Omega." Nature was, is, and shall be, not necessarily as she appears to us to day, for as we know that in the past this earth presented different aspects and produced different forms of life from those now existing; so in the future this planet may present different aspects and produce other forms of life than those now existing.

Whether this planet in the future shall roll through space freighted with intelligent beings or shall circle for ages cold and lifeless, the change is of as little consequence in Nature as the change from living to dead corpuscle in the blood of the animal; it is a part of Nature, life, growth, death, and life again, never beginning, never ending, unchangeable in her endless change.

Man, conscious for a time, may design and contrive to attain results; but Nature, all-engendering springs up in countless modes of life and motion.

Millions of leaves in a pasture ground, and a pasture ground on every leaf. Billions of drops in an ocean, and an ocean in every drop. From the infinitely great to the infinitely small, Nature is one infinite life.

The mould on an old shoe, or a mountain range, testify equally to her creative powers. The limits which man imputes to Nature do not exist in Nature, but in our limited conception of Nature.

Your Reverence says "Design exists in the Divine Mind as the exemplar of those things which he has designed. The design of the world was in God before the world began to exist. Creation was the exterior manifestation of divine design."

Your Reverence here means one of two things. First. That design existed in the Divine Mind from eternity; that is, that the design of the Universe is coeternal with God, and therefore was never planned or designed; then as an architect who builds after plans already in existence cannot lay claim to the title of designer, so the plan of the Universe being co-existent with God, is eternal and exists independent of a designing intelligence—exists independent of God. Therefore adaptation, harmony, order, or apparent design in Nature do not prove a Designer.

Or secondly. If your Reverence means that there was a time when neither the Universe nor the design existed, then there was a time when design became an *addition* to the "Divine Mind," and that mind to which a new perception can be added is not infinite.

I return the "design argument" and "Paley's watch" to your Reverence and the first time you meet a savage ask him what kind of a watch may be made out of nothing?

## CONCLUSION.

Before concluding, let me say a few words on the profound (?) reasoning with which your Reverence "sweeps away like a cobweb, the atheistic stupidity which claims the world to be eternal."

After the usual manner of your kind, you first awaken prejudice in your hearers, by putting the eternity of matter on the *index expurgatorius*, not daring to put the materialist conception of the Universe fairly; you are guilty of bad faith yourself while warning your flock against "infidel bad faith on this and every other point."

Now I hold it to be bad faith to misrepresent knowingly the views of an adversary.

Therefore, when your Reverence says "the first mover of the world was the world itself, say the atheists" you are saying that which the very title of the subject of your remark at the moment, viz. "the eternity of matter," proves to be a falsehood; for how can that which is eternally moving have a "first mover"?

To the atheist who believes that the Universe is the One Infinite Existence, how silly and ridiculous must your assertion appear, that "the first mover of the world was the world itself, say the atheists." It but proves to the atheist your utter inability to deal with the question of eternal motion, as you can not rid your mind even for a few moments of a "first mover," you are unable seemingly to rid yourself of the idea that matter is dead substance, without properties, while force is a separate entity which moves it; on the contrary, the atheist holds that force without matter does not exist: force is a property of matter, matter being eternal force is eternal, and your "first mover" an absurdity.

Heracitus of Ephesus says; "The Universe, containing all that exists has been created neither by a God nor by a man; but has always existed and will ever remain a vivifying fire, being kindled and extinguished according to definite laws."

"A thing without properties is a nonentity" says Drossbach.

Annihilate matter, and force, intelligence, life,—everything that is, vanishes. As something cannot be made out of nothing, neither can something be resolved into nothing.

If your Reverence would spare an hour per day from the time you devote to the glorification of your idols to the study of natural phenomena you would, perhaps, speak of your fellow creatures who have arrived at different conclusions from yourself, with more respect and a new feeling.

Buchner in his "Force and Matter" says, "If the material particles capable of an electric condition had never existed, there would have been no electricity, and we should never have been able by mere abstraction to acquire the least knowledge or conception of electricity. "Heat and light," says Czolbie, "arise, as experience shows, like electrical and magnetic phenomena, from the reciprocal relations of molecules and atoms." "No one" says Vogt, "has ever ventured to maintain that a power of secretion can exist independant of a gland, or contractility independant of muscular fibre."

Creation, Rev. Sir, I hold to be merely a change or transformation of substance already in existance, and in accordance with its own inherent forces. Your Rev. by assuming that matter or the Universe needed a first mover, begs the whole question.

Your silly talk about the protoplasm is but an admission that you are not acquainted with the writings of Tyndall, Huxley and others who have made the genesis of life an earnest study.

There is not a scientist or freethinker to day worthy of the name who does not recognise creation—in the above sense—as necessary to account for life in the protoplasm as it is to account for life in the man. That—as Huxley says—protoplasm in lobster may become protoplasm in man, is reasonable, for the component parts of our bodies are continually changing; the beef, bread, fish, potatoes, that we eat one day, becoming part and parcel of ourselves the next; grass one day, ox the next, and dignified by the name of man the day after; all this, I say, is reasonable, and all observation and experience will go to prove the truth of the assertion; but that protoplasm in priest should have the power to give absolution or deal damnation to protoplasm in layman surpasses indeed the wildest scientific dreams.



Your premises being self-contradictory and false, your conclusions are without value.

And after all, Rev. Sir, what has the eternity of matter, or the protoplasm to do with the truth of christianity, or the existence of the Christian or Bible God?

Belief in the existence of God, Rev. Sir, is quite possible while rejecting the God of Roman Catholicism or the God of any other creed. The God of whom your Reverence speaks, "as whispering in the solitude of the woods, rushing in the Tornado, and raging in the hurricane on Alpine heights," and you might have added—in whose resistless path man, believer or unbeliever is of no more consequence than the dust of the earth;—is but the God of Nature, and has nothing in common with the changeable flattery-loving Phantom who is said to dwell above the "highest stars;"—a very indefinite region, which is receding from this planet in proportion as the telescope increases in power.

Think of the God who speaks in the starry hosts of heaven—contemplate the myriads of suns, stars, and constellations which sparkle in the infinite depths of space, and then think of the God which some good catholic has painted—depicting him as a bald-headed old man in a red cloak—creating them. Gaze wonderingly into the Infinite depths until you seem to lose your very identity, desires, hopes, jealousies fading away, your being seems merged into that of the Universe,—the dew drop is merged in the ocean and you become one with the all;—and then contemplate the miserable scarecrow of a devil creating God who *wants* us to shout his glory, and who is perpetually *trying* the creatures he has made to *see* if they are faithful to him!

Think of the infinity, the vastness, the power manifested to us in the Universe; think of the myriads of worlds which we have every reason to believe are peopled with living beings, and then think of the keys of Heaven being placed in the hands of an atom on this little planet we call earth! No, No, Rev. Sir, you must not rob the everlasting God of Nature, to deck the usurper you have placed in the clouds, who is every way worthy of you, and you are worthy of him. He created you in a place called Eden six thousand years ago and to day you, as befits your high station and mighty genius, return the compliment by creating him; and of what? Truly may it be said that the priest and not the materialist makes of matter—a God.

We are often told by the priest that "the catholic church is the mother of learning." Well yes, She is the mother of that learning which makes man a cringing slave at the foot of the priest. Here is a quotation from Tyndall's "Belfast Address" which speaks volumes on this point. "In Nov. 1873 Seventy of the Students and Ex-Students of the Catholic University in Ireland, complain to the Episcopal Board that, the lecture list for the faculty of science did not contain the name of a single Professor of the Physical or Natural sciences, and point with bitterness to the fact, that the name of no Irish Catholic is known in connection with Physical or Natural sciences."

Your Reverence is bold enough to say "the world moves." Is not this assertion rank heresy? Have you forgotten that in the Pontificate of Paul the fifth, that your church denounced the doctrine which teaches that the world moves as, "that false Pythagorean doctrine, entirely opposed to Holy writ" and further "In order that this opinion may not further spread, to the damage of *catholic truth*, it is ordered that this and all other books teaching the like doctrine be suspended, and by this decree they are all respectively suspended, forbidden and condemned?"

Here is an example of how this infallible church with the "indefectable armor" sought to crush a scientific truth. And what is the result?

The church has been forced by science to eat every word of her arrogant decree, and the doctrine she condemned as being contrary to "Holy writ" is taught to day in every catholic school.

A comet appearing in the heavens is looked upon as a matter of course in our day, but when Halley's comet appeared in 1456 "the Pope commanded the church bells of Europe to be rung to scare the monster away." Comment is needless.

Your Reverence says that, "if every man, woman and child in the ranks of christianity, were as depraved as Captain Kidd, or Cacus, what has that to do with the principles of christianity?"

Well, Reverend Sir, why did you not discuss the principles of christianity, instead of heaping abuse on people who are just as conscientious as you are, and less vituperative?

If the Spencers, the Mills, the Tyndalls, and Darwins, are intellectual "pigmies" when compared with the mighty genius of your Reverence—if you can sweep away the conclusions of modern scientific thought as you would a cobweb,—why hide your light under a bushel?—why waste so much pure (!) science and profound learning (?) in the columns of an obscure sheet, the greater number of whose readers must have wondered what you were talking about half the time; but who "though they failed to reach the particular sophism," no doubt thought your Reverence very clever?

Why not publish a few out of the "fifty simple arguments" which you are prepared to "furnish," in the columns of some liberal or scientific Journal, if you honestly believe that "any one" of them "would sweep away like a cobweb the Atheistic stupidity which says that the world is eternal"?

Is it the knowledge that in those Journals you would not be secure from reply, that keeps your Reverence back? or was it merely a bit of brag and an untruth as well?

And after all, Rev. Sir, I think that the depravity of men, women, and children in the ranks of christianity would have a great deal to do with the principles of christianity;" you boast that the catholic is born into his religion as the fish into water, and certainly with each succeeding advance in life the priest administers a fresh dose of superstition. With capability of reading comes the "Lives of the Saints," "the Glories of Mary" and others of that ilk which prepare him for accepting still greater absurdities. He is completely in the hands of the priest.

If after all this he turns out "a bad lot," will you tell us of what earthly use are the principles of christianity as applied by the catholic church?

The principles of christianity as we know them in the churches have had a fair and favorable trial; the church has been backed by the civil power, money and landed properties have been bestowed on her in every christian land, for hundreds of years the people have bent their necks to the yoke of the priest, for centuries they have been led by the nose, epoch after epoch the priest has sung his sophistries in their ears, and century after century the people have wallowed in filth, drunkenness and crime; christians make more whiskey, sell more whiskey, and drink more whiskey than the people of all other creeds on the globe combined.

Christians boast unceasingly of their brotherly love, and prove it by slandering their fellow christians ere they have left the church steps. Christians in broadcloth and in silk sweep through the aisles of christian churches to their comfortable pews, while poverty stricken christians, ragged and unwashed herd together on the bare floor. The fact is—the almighty dollar rules, and the priest well fed, well clothed and well housed, cares little for the people so long as the privileges of the church are not interfered with.

If by the principles of Christianity you mean those maxims of brotherly love and morality ascribed to Jesus, I reply that those moral maxims were taught by others long before the time Jesus is said to have lived, and are no more the property of Christianity than of any other system.

Good men have been put to death in all ages on the charge of heresy and blasphemy and Jesus paid the penalty of opposing a then powerful priest-hood with his life.

Men were just, patriotic, and sober long before Jesus lived ; he but repeated what others had taught and practised before him. If Jesus Christ lived to day he would be denounced by christians as a communist, a tramp, and a heretic.

But if you mean the dogmas of infallibility, confession, transubstantiation, immaculate conception, purgatory, etc. I believe they have a great deal to do with the vice and intemperence which exist in christian lands to day.

Some of the greatest ruffians the world has ever known have been firm believers in those dogmas,

Belief in the principles of christianity did not prevent the slaughter of thousands of unfortunate women, who were tortured, burnt, racked and drowned on the ridiculous charge of witchcraft, or of dealings with the devil.

Why do christians to day ignore the commands of God in Ex. (22 C. 18 v.) "Thou shalt not suffer a Wizard to live"? Why are the commands of God (Ex. 22 C. 20 v.)—to put the unbeliever to death—not enforced in these days?

Why do not christians burn the heretic as in the good old days when "severe statutes" protected their Deity from the assaults of unbelief.

Christianity to a certain extent fosters crime, because the sinner can always fall back on the divine insolvent act, and heaven is as near the gallows as the altar.

When your Reverence says that "a man may be a good husband, father, and citizen, and yet be a very great rascal" you simply make yourself ridiculous. A man who is a good father, husband and citizen fulfills all the duties of this life and can afford to pity the miserable bigotry of your Reverence, who judges every man a rascal who does not think as you do.

For my part, Rev. Sir, I would be well content to see the world peopled with men, every one of whom was "a good husband, father and citizen," having the "best possible civil and domestic qualities."

Your Reverence is enraged because the Free Thinker dares to defend himself from Christian calumny, which spares neither the living nor the dead. You say that infidels boast of their virtue, etc.

Your Reverence feels on this question something like the man who, having had a monopoly of a certain line of business for years, views with anger and dismay the opening and efforts of a rival establishment.

But console yourself, Rev. Sir, the heretic can never hope to rival the church in this respect, for whatever claims he may have to do and be, he has to fight and work for. Thomas Paine the unbeliever, awoke the spirit of manhood on this continent a century ago, and to day it is a home for all those whose spirit will not brook the Tyrant's control.

Robert Owen, the infidel and socialist and his coadjutors, Henry Fawcett says, "were the pioneers of many useful social reforms. At his factory at New Lanark the first systematic effort was made to secure the education of factory children and to protect them against over work. He was also, in part, the originator of the first infant school, established in London in 1819.

Heretics, men emancipated from the thralldom of Roman catholicism, have shed their blood and sacrificed their lives for the rights of the Irish people. A heretic to day (Parnell) has organised one of the greatest reform movements that Ireland has ever witnessed.

Bradlaugh in England is fighting the fight of right against might; he is opposed ostensibly on the ground that he is an unbeliever, but really because he is the uncompromising foe of the many frauds by which the British people are robbed of their money to support titled idlers in luxury.

And after the heretic has been imprisoned, after his name has been covered with obloquy, after the rebellion has become a revolution, after that which was against law and order, has become law and order, then the priest mounts the pulpit and claims the credit and reward, saying to the people "see what we the Lord's annointed have done for you."

The priesthood with a few individual exceptions did all in their power to crush the land league at its birth; and it was only after they saw that the movement could not be stopped that they recognized the danger of further opposition and in some cases have given their aid to the movement.

For those priests, who, remembering they were men also, have from the first stood with the people, I have nothing but respect. But the policy of a priest or two has not the effect which the distinct utterance of the church would have. True, the pope "loves his Irish children;" but this is a very non-committal statement, and no doubt his Irish children have earned his love by their contributions to his coffers.

And now if your Reverence does not like to have the little peccadillos of christians held up to the light of day, pause before you ascribe a tendency towards a degrading sensualism to those who do not obey your command to "bow down and humbly adore;" when you denounce Luther and the 8th Henry, remember Constantine and Borgia, when you would speak of Atheism as a "black blotch on the page of human Annals, turn first to the history of your church; think of the many bloody sacrifices she has offered to heaven in the name of God, think of the trials by combat, and neglect of sanitary precautions, which was the logical result of a blind trust in Providence.

When you speak of your God "providing for the widow and orphan" turn to our daily papers and read of widows and orphans starving to death, freezing to death, and worked to death, and hold your peace; and when you next deliver a lecture on "the infidelity of the present day," please to remember that it is not a question of how a man parts his hair, or buttons his coat; not a question of whether there are good protestants, good catholics, and good infidels, for there are good and bad of each; not a question of whether there is more brain above the christian ear than above the infidel ear; not whether socialism is the logical result of free thought, for with socialism some of the best men of the world are identified, and you cannot deny that its object is to remove ignorance, poverty, and misery, from among the people;—for which reason no doubt your church denounces it—not a question of whether there is one God or none, but whether you *know* anything about God?—whether Christianity as exhibited by the church of which you are a notable product, or as regarded in the light—or rather darkness—of its supernatural origin, and astounding miracles, is really true?

When you can transmute legend and fable into the gold coinage of fact, the bell-metal that rings so loudly through your lecture will pass as legal mintage among thinking men—but not till then.

And now, Rev. Sir. we part company. If I have handled you somewhat rudely, be good enough to consider that delicacy of touch is not to be expected of a man whose hands are hardened with daily toil.

And you, kind readers, brother-toilers, whatever your religious opinions may be, I ask that you will "speak me fair" and if you cannot allow that I have done "the state some service" you will not deny me honesty of purpose and love of truth.



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